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The New Frontier

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The Olive Branch

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

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TBD

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

Letters

New Era, New Hope

The death of our leader, President Yasser Arafat (May Allah Bless his Soul), left the Palestinian people at an examination point. Yasser Arafat was elected in the first Palestinian elections in 1996, the first democratic step in Palestine, and now all that this man built was put to the test.

The Palestinian people showed its ability to lead itself and to choose its leader from a number of candidates and political parties in free elections. This went better than anyone expected.

Palestinians, one more time, showed their commitment to peace by electing Mahmoud Abbas, one of the people who took part in making the Oslo Agreements. Israel kept making Arafat as an excuse to reject peace initiatives but now that he is gone, Israel has no excuse. Now people are hanging on to hope, hope for a fair peace, and we should not miss this chance.

Ghassan B'arah (Nablus)

Dear Seeds of Peace:

Four years have passed since I took part in the Seeds of Peace Camp. I will always remember each moment I spent there, because the experience I went through in during the SOP program has remained deeply not only in my personality, but also in my life.

Then, I was living in a state of war, as were many other Seeds, and I saw a lot of dreadful things during this war which lasted for many years in

my country. Many things were destroyed, and many innocent people were killed. During the war, and after it, there were many questions that I did not know how to answer. During that period, I got a chance to take part in the Seeds of Peace program. The experience I got at camp helped me realize many things. With the help of SOP, and especially with the help of two great facilitators (Sonja and Olga), I realized that hate and revenge are the greatest causes of evil, and forgiveness, toleration and patience

are the greatest characteristics for human beings and society.

In my country live three different nations with three different religion and cultures, and many people thought this is the biggest reason for the war. But through my experience in SOP, I realized that this diversity was a positive, not a negative for my country, and we need to be proud of it.

First, thanks to God, than thanks to the founder of SOP, John Wallach (God bless his soul), and thanks to all the people of SOP, because they managed to unite young people of different religions into one voice, A VOICE OF PEACE, so we can plant peace in the world.

"Never doubt that a small group of committed individuals can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

Erol Cinara (Sarajevo)



Palestinian National Authority
Beit Jala Municipality
P.O.Box (1) - Tel.: 274 2601
Fax: 274 4457



السلطة الوطنية الفلسطينية
بلدية بيت جالا
ح.ب (١) - تلفون: ٢٧٤ ٢٦٠١
فاكس: ٢٧٤ ٤٤٥٧

Date: March 28, 2005 التاريخ: ٢٨/٣/٢٠٠٥

Ref. No. BJ/10/19/150 الرقم: ١٥٠/١٩/١٠/بج

To: Seeds of Peace Center for Coexistence,
Jerusalem

Subject: Thank you letter.

Dear Sir, Madam,

It gives me a great pleasure to extend to you my sincere regards and appreciation for your continuous efforts in achieving peace through dedicated programs that aim at empowering Palestinian and Israeli youth with the leadership skills required to advance reconciliation and coexistence.

I would also like to extend my appreciation for the voluntary work that nine of Seeds of Peace members conducted in the Peace Public Park in Beit Jala on Friday March 18th 2005. It was a valuable work that shows interest and support to our projects.

Best regards and appreciation,
Sincerely,



بلدية بيت جالا
28 MAR 2005
Municipality of Beit Jala

Raji Zeidan,
Mayor

The Beit Jala Municipality thanks Seeds for cleaning up its public park (for more coverage, see page 13)

From the Editor

I was sitting in a hotel room in Prague when I first heard about the

assassination of Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri. For me, this event was one of many in the past six months that has signaled a new wave of change in the Middle East, which has largely remained stagnant since the Intifada which began in 2000. In the past half year, the leader of the Palestinian people, Yasir Arafat, passed away; democratic elections in Palestine brought Mahmoud Abbas to the premiership; Syria, however slowly, has begun to pull its troops from Lebanon; Israel inches closer to its planned withdrawal from the Gaza Strip in July; and Egypt has returned its ambassador to Israel. Most poignant for me perhaps have been the democratic elections in Iraq, which evoked the American patriot Patrick Henry's words in 1775: "Give me liberty or give me death." Risking their lives, Iraqi citizens came out in droves to vote for candidates in that country's first democratic, multi-party elections.

In the Middle East, one never wants to sound overly optimistic; but as far as Seeds of Peace is concerned, I feel that the Middle East is blossoming, awash in change and activity. Since the beginning of 2005, there have been over six different seminars in the region that have brought together Seeds from Israel and the Arab world, including the Beyond Borders reunion in Amman, bringing together Arab and American Seeds who first met in Maine during the summer of 2004. In Israel and Palestine, our staff has been hard at work with a variety of ongoing programs engaging Seeds from Jerusalem, the Galilee and the Triangle, central Israel and the West Bank. Trying to describe them all here would not do them justice, so we have included a special section detailing all of the various programs that have occurred in the region since the beginning of the year. It has been hard work laying the groundwork for various uni-national, bi-national and community engagement programs, but with the help of older Seeds who have begun to take leadership roles, we have been able to cast a wide net over a large and diverse region.

I hope you also like the new look of The Olive Branch. With the help of our global group of regional editors, and especially those from Israel and Palestine who meet regularly in Jerusalem, with each issue I try to make sure Seeds are involved every step of the way. This includes thinking up story ideas, collecting articles and now, determining the look and feel of the magazine.

This is very important, since, I regret to say, this will be my last issue as Editor-in-Chief of The Olive Branch. Having worked with a group of budding journalists and designers, I feel more comfortable leaving this publication in the capable hands of Seeds who will determine its future direction. As my tenure as a student and editor in Jerusalem comes to a close, I must say that my affiliation with Seeds of Peace for the past three years has been an eye-opening, in-the-field education about global conflict and the Arab-Israeli conflict in particular. I will miss all of the Seeds I have worked with, but I am confident that with extraordinary personalities like these, the future is bright.

Seth

From the Desk of Timothy P. Wilson



March 30, 2005

To the Seeds of Peace family:

Let me first start off this issue of The Olive Branch with my thanks. I am so thankful for all of the support that the entire Seeds family has offered to me and to my family in the recent weeks. As you know, I suffered a stroke a few weeks ago and, though the stroke did not cause any permanent impairment, I am currently undergoing rehabilitation to regain the full use of my left arm and leg. I am making great progress and, in fact, have been working on Seeds business during the past days. It is with sincerity that I say that all of the wonderful thoughts extended to me, to Jacquie, and to the rest of my family have been instrumental in my speedy recovery. During times like these I feel the power of what Seeds of Peace really is. Though I may not have been able to respond to

each and every kind gesture in the past weeks, please know that I truly do appreciate all that you have done. All the emails, cards, hugs and spiritual strength have encouraged me more than you know. Jacquie, too, sends her thanks. She has welcomed all of the support extended her way; she has needed emotional comfort in order to take care of silly, feisty, stubborn old me. Thank you.

This morning I've been meeting with Leslie, reviewing Seed applications, counselor applications, and many other camp-related papers. There's paper everywhere. All of this paper is so encouraging though. I cannot tell you what a wonderful group of people, Seeds and staff alike, will join together for two camp sessions in Maine this summer. I'm sure that this summer's camp sessions will sneak up on all of us (as they always do).

That having been said, I have a favor to ask of all Seeds: please pass along the importance of SOP to the new Seeds who will come through the program this summer. Though no words can prepare anyone for the experience, I am sure that encouragement and excitement for all the new Seeds will go a long way in encouraging them to be strong, active members of their respective delegations. It would mean a lot to me if each and every Seed would take the time to reach out to a new Seed before they board a plane and head to the woods of Maine.

I'm very excited by all the reports of the Beyond

Borders conference held in Amman, Jordan just recently. I cannot tell you how proud I am of Eva Gordon, Zaqloub Said and many of the other SOP staff who helped to organize such an amazing conference. We are blessed with a wonderful group of Beyond Borders Seeds. Thank you all for making the conference a success.

Lots of news from the Center of recent graduate group dialogue sessions, Purim and Easter festivities, school meetings, dialogue groups, and other fun activities has found their way to me. I cannot tell you how proud I am of all the work that is going on in the region. Seeds and staff alike: thank you for making the programming in the region so diverse and so strong.

There are many great articles and art located within the pages of this edition of the Olive Branch. I am continually amazed by this publication. I hope that each and every one of you reads this edition and can find somewhere, in some little corner, a reason to continue being hopeful that SOP's activities will one day inspire a new reality.

Be safe,

TPW

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After a long battle with cancer, Azzam al-Jundi – longtime Center staff member, devoted husband and father of six, and one of the quickest wits most of us will ever know – succumbed on December 30, 2004. Both Seeds and staff share their memories of his sarcastic humor, warm hospitality and hours of entertainment on the roads of Israel and Palestine



Sami al-Jundi (Jerusalem)

We knew it would happen, but when it happened it was very hard. Two weeks before his death, Azzam asked all the brothers to meet in his house and asked us if the family burial plot was ready. On Wednesday, December 29, I visited Azzam and he asked me the same question. He asked me to bring his kids to the hospital and he spent one hour with them. He had hardly slept for the past two weeks. The following day I got a call from the hospital. They told me that Azzam passed away. His wife told me that he had slept like a baby but during the last hours of the morning his heart became weak. The doctors couldn't do anything and at his heart stopped. Allah y`rhammo, Azzam.

Eli Shteinberg (Haifa)

When I found out Azzam was sick, I visited him at his home in East Jerusalem. I took a bus from my army base in Eilat. I remember Azzam was very touched that I took the five-hour trip in the middle of the week just to come and see him. I told him that he and his brothers used to drive us back and forth for two years, in the middle

of the week, at the end of it, in winter or summer, midday or midnight, so taking a five-hour bus trip wasn't such a big deal after all.

I don't remember when I first met Azzam. He was always there when we needed him, in the Center, or making coffee on a sidewalk in Afula, or the time I got him and Mazen the worst shawarma he swore he ever had. Or driving through the Jordan

valley in the middle of the night, or to Haifa on a Saturday afternoon. He was always around, right until he couldn't do it anymore.

In the fall of 2004, on the porch of his home in Issawiya, overlooking the Judean Desert, we drank tea and Azzam looked very peaceful. He knew how bad his condition was and told me that although he wasn't a



Azzam with daughter Yara and friend Ned

religious man, listening to Koran readings made it easier on him to accept the fact that he was probably going to die soon. The next time I went to see him, he was almost unable to move, but was still very talkative, and played with his kids. A few days after that he called me from Acre, where he was spending the day with his family, and he asked me if I was around. I told him I wasn't but that I would come to Jerusalem to see him.

I was supposed to visit him at the hospital the day before his death; Ned from the Center called me in the morning and told me he had passed away. I went to see his family immediately in the Old City of Jerusalem. Unfortunately, I didn't stay for long - without Azzam and his trusty Ford Transit around, I had to catch the last bus home. I'll miss you Azzam, and all those long hours in the passenger seat next to you, talking, laughing, enjoying the ride.

Jared Fishman (Washington, DC)

When I first met Azzam, he was still a full-time transit driver, going up and down the Ramallah-Jerusalem road, picking up passengers and dropping them off. He used to let me run the line with him, collecting money, and shouting out, "Ramallah, Ramallah, Ramallah." It always used to make him laugh. I tried to convince him to let me drive, and got the patented Azzam al-Jundi response: "Shut up," "Thank you very much indeed," and "You know what I mean."

And so we drove. I logged in countless numbers of miles with Azzam. He would love to get into endless fights with me, ultimately resulting in a hair-pulling war, where we would each try to pull out the other's arm hair, all while navigating down the road. He was a great storyteller, infusing comedy and tragedy – the story of his life – so seamlessly into every tale. Even after spending five hours in a transit with him, and now lacking any arm hair, I was always sad that the ride was over.

Azzam was the kind of guy who could always make you laugh. His biting sarcasm could make any situation easier; he was always quick with a witty come back. Azzam was also a great chess player. He challenged me one day, and needless to say, he destroyed me. I didn't want to play anymore, but he made me play him three more times, each time with the same result. A few days later, someone else asked me if I knew how to play chess. I said yeah. Azzam was quick to intervene, "You don't know how to play chess, you only know how to move the pieces."

What I loved most about Azzam was how he welcomed me, and all the rest of the Seeds of Peace team, into his home. He welcomed my family, and friends, and he always made me feel that his home was my home. We ate countless maklubes with Azzam, enjoying his witty banter, his wife Wafaa's gentle kindness, and enjoying the playful atmosphere that his six kids would always provide. Azzam was one of the unluckiest people I know, but he was always showered with the amazing luck of a close-knit family and good friends.

Even as Azzam was dying, he kept his head up. Even as his body was deteriorating, his spirit and wits flourished. When he told me he was hurting, I told him that I thought he looked pretty good . . . except for the fact that he was ugly (a usual jab we would all take at Azzam). His face lit up with a smile, and he put his arm around me, and said, "I know, this is my curse, but at least I am not as ugly as you . . ."

I am really going to miss Azzam. He was a truly special person. Allah y`rhammo, Azzam. I love you.



Seeds

Siddharth Shah (Mumbai)

Here in India, Standard 10 (10th grade) is considered to be one of the most important years of your academic life. On the basis of the examination that occurs during this year, one receives admission to the various junior colleges. This test is the first major general examination, wherein all the students of Maharashtra (our state) appear for the same exam and compete



against each other. Around 100,000 students take this exam.

Last year, in March 2004, I scored 93.20% in the exam, standing ninth in the entire city of Mumbai. My name appeared on the merit list of students, and my achievements were noted by the mayor of Mumbai, Mahadeo Devle, the Rotary Club, the Lions Club and several other organizations.

Mamdouh Eid (Cairo)

Mamdouh was one of the organizers of Avex 2005, an aviation expo that took place in Cairo in February. The exhibition featured leading aviation manufacturers and suppliers such as Airbus, Bombardier, Gulf Stream, ATR, Danish Composite, Pratt, Whitney and Rolls Royce. It was a large event attended by many ministers and inaugurated by Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. At the expo, the world's leading pilots participated in an air show to entertain visitors.

Mamdouh is in his third year studying architecture at the Modern Science and Arts University and has been selected for the Egyptian National Basketball Youth team several times. He is active in Seeds of Peace in Egypt, having been an organizer for the Sharm al-Sheikh Seminar in Egypt last summer and a counselor at the Arab Seminar in Jordan last June.



Mamdouh in one of the planes featured at the exhibition (Credit: Mamdouh Eid)

Lionel Daich (Ashdod)

(as reported by Agam Rafaeli, Haifa)

Currently living in Ashdod is Lionel Daich, an 18-year-old Seed. Lionel returned from camp in 2002 with many of the values he had learned and lived. He spread those values in all of his circles, at school, with friends, playing the guitar and all the way to the city student body, of which he was president.

On one of their many quests to help the community, the Ashdod student body entered into a partnership with the local branch of UNICEF (the United Nations International Children's Fund). The city's student body launched a massive fundraising, awareness-raising and publicity project for UNICEF-Israel and UNICEF International. In return, half of the funds they raised were used to help children and youth in



Ashdod, which is the fifth largest city in Israel and places third on the poverty list. The project, in which Lionel took a major part, was an enormous success and ever since Ashdod serves as an important UNICEF liaison.

Lionel got so hyped from working with UNICEF that he sent them a letter listing his projects and asked if he could take part in their future activities. UNICEF's response was an invitation to its annual board meeting. Attendance at this meeting granted Lionel the awesome chance to take part of the Israeli Foundation for UNICEF. Ever since Lionel serves as part of the board of the Israeli Foundation for UNICEF.

Lionel's work spans over many areas, and his current actions aim to create a bond between the Israeli and Palestinian branches of UNICEF to work together. May we have many more Lionels.

in the Lead

Muhammad Haj Yehia (Taybeh)

One day I sat thinking, "How can I contribute to Seeds of Peace?" I am a big fan of computers and so I came up with the idea of building a



website. I called the organizer of our region and said to him that I found the perfect project. I spent

many sleepless days and nights to build a successful site: SOP-ME, at <http://www.sop-me.com>.

I worked hard to offer interactive features such as forums for keeping Seeds in touch, downloads and news for keeping Seeds informed. I update the site continually and do my best to make it look cool and attractive.

Seeds of Peace contributed a small amount of money for the storage space on the Internet, and I asked people from all delegations to find one representative to be responsible for their area's news and projects. The website has become 100% Seeds, and today we have four great administrators: Ibrahim Dakkak and Aya Zuaiter from Jerusalem, Dana Audallah from Jordan and Zach Ruchman from the US. And we still

are waiting to hear from other delegations . . .

The site initially started as a regional project for the Seeds of the Triangle, but little by little, it became an international website accessible to everyone. Today, the statistics show that up to 1000 people visit the website daily. I hope more people will continue to visit the site and will involve Seeds from around the world.



Homepage of the Middle East SOP Website.
<http://www.sop-me.com>

Where are They Now? The



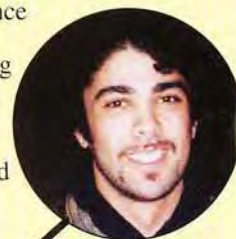
Abed Iriqat

I received my B.A in law from Al-Quds University and I am now training in the Palestinian courts for a career in law. Since my first summer with Seeds in 1993, I have participated in a number of SOP activities, including the Amman seminar in 1996, the seminar in Cyprus in 2004 and the Mediation and Negotiation

graduate course at the Center in Jerusalem. I recently participated in an Israeli-Palestinian dialogue about the media at the Peres Center in Tel Aviv. I still volunteer with SOP and I view it as one of the great achievements and activities in my life.

Wael Bader

I'm now living in California and am working in the film/media business as a freelance producer and director. I also work part time in theatrical distribution, sending out press kits, movie posters and trailers. My interest in media was definitely something that Seeds of Peace had a large impact on. Over the years, I started understanding the mechanism of the media and realized that it is THE single most powerful apparatus in the private realm, and I wanted to harness this kind of influence to represent my part of the world with a new and refreshing image - one that was void of stereotypes and miscommunications.



Yehoyada Mande'el

After I finished my military service, I started working for the Jewish Agency, an umbrella organization for Jews around the world. I worked for the Jewish Agency in South Africa and in the USA, doing educational and promotion programs about Israel in Jewish and non-Jewish communities. As a law student at the Hebrew University I volunteer at the Magistrates Court of Jerusalem, explaining and giving aid to those with difficulties in understanding legal procedures at the court. I also work for the SOP Center in Jerusalem, as the coordinator of the Israeli graduates program.



Badawi Qawasmeh

Badawi Qawasmeh is currently on a Fulbright Scholarship at Stanford University where he is completing a Master's degree in engineering. He organizes events to raise awareness about events in Palestine; he recently helped a Deheishe refugee camp dance troupe to tour various US college campuses. He received degrees in engineering and business from Bir Zeit University and in Grenoble, France, and before this he worked in Jerusalem at the

Seeds of Peace Class of 1993

Ariel Margalit

For the past seven years I have been covering the reality of life here in Israel, working as a reporter and an anchorman, first for the IDF radio station Galei Zahal during my army service, and later for Israeli Channel 10. I have covered some of the most significant events of the last few years – the war in Iraq, the US elections in 2004, the SARS epidemic in Asia, and more. In Israel I covered the IDF withdrawal from south Lebanon, the October 2000 events, the ongoing missile launches at Sderot, the siege and bombardment of Jenin, the death of late chairman Arafat, the on-going terrorist attacks in Israel, alongside the military actions of Israel in Gaza and the West Bank. Alongside my career as a journalist, I am currently a student at Tel Aviv University majoring in philosophy and business.



About About

After graduating from high school, I joined the Israeli army, and after that I worked on a kibbutz for a year and then traveled to South America for 6 months, seeking some freedom. Today I am 24 years old, working at Partner Communications Company (the cellular company Orange). I still live in my village of Ossifa.

I am sure that I grew out of Seeds of Peace a peaceful tree, one that loves humanity, adores peace and understanding. I thank Seeds of Peace for this idea and for its efforts. It is so good to live and to know that you are surrounded with people seeking peace and respect for others. My plans are to start studying someday, or perhaps travel, but certainly to stay a member of such a great organization, dedicating more time to it if possible.



Tamer Nagy Mahmoud

I have been pursuing a dual degree in law and international affairs at American University in Washington, DC. I am also a research associate at the Public International Law & Policy Group working on transitional post-conflict constitutions and devising negotiation strategies for government entities, NGOs and non-state parties. I received my Bachelor's Degree from Earlham College in 2002, majoring in Politics and Economics. Since 1993, I've stayed close to Seeds of Peace. I came back to camp for several years and worked as a counselor for a couple of years.



Matthew Liebman

I am presently living in New York City and working for a start-up Investment Management firm. The best part about Seeds of Peace for me is that the experiences that I had as a 15-year-old become more valuable as I get older. My career choice does not directly relate to lessons learned while at Seeds of Peace, but I utilize skills that I garnered and honed as a result of my participation that inaugural summer. I have the



ability to listen to others who disagree with me, and this causes me to review my own beliefs. In addition, the basic notion that others around the world are too often denied the opportunity to live in a peaceful environment keeps my daily challenges in perspective.



Girls smile for the camera on the steps of the royal Jordanian palace (Credit: Allison Monroe)

The Reunion

Clearing up Misconceptions about America Yazid Al-Saeedi (Sana'a)

In this era of wars, international disputes and misconceptions promoting peace and friendships becomes more important than ever and in this field Seeds of Peace has proved itself to be most effective. Before my arrival to the United States I had my own misconceptions, and was skeptical since I was influenced by the anti-American media. But upon my arrival, I was able to see the real face of America. In the camp we interacted with American youth in different ways and through different activities which made me realize that Americans are not so different than us; they like



King Abdullah II and Seeds of Peace President Aaron Miller at the royal palace with Seeds (Credit: Allison Monroe)

Seven months after meeting in Maine, Arab and American Beyond Borders participants reunited for a week in Jordan to continue their dialogue sessions, tour the country, speak with senior officials and reminisce about their summer together

fairness and hate injustice, they admire persuasion and hate force. Most importantly, they dream of a better future not just for themselves, but for the whole world. The only differences I found between us are in culture and religion. Every American I've ever met has shown a great deal of respect for my culture and religion. This kind of attitude is what compels me to admire and value American society.

When I arrived home I felt that I had an obligation – actually, a responsibility – to clear up the misconceptions that my people had about Americans. This was one of the hardest things I've ever done in my life, but I was well equipped with many skills that I gained at the camp. I started in my family, then my school, and there I faced many difficulties. But Yemenis prove themselves to be open-minded and I was able to convey my message to schoolmates and even several think tanks.

After being apart from each other for six months, we and our American friends met again in Jordan. We listened to a number of speakers from different countries who suffer from conflicts and look forward to peace, such as Iraqis, Palestinians and Israelis.

During my stay in America and Jordan, I developed strong friendships and great relations. I didn't think it would be hard to say goodbye to my American friends; actually, I found it REALLY hard to leave those with whom you share with principles and beliefs. In my heart I believe that we will meet in the near future, and hopefully we will be in positions that allow us to turn our dreams into a reality.

Books for Baghdad

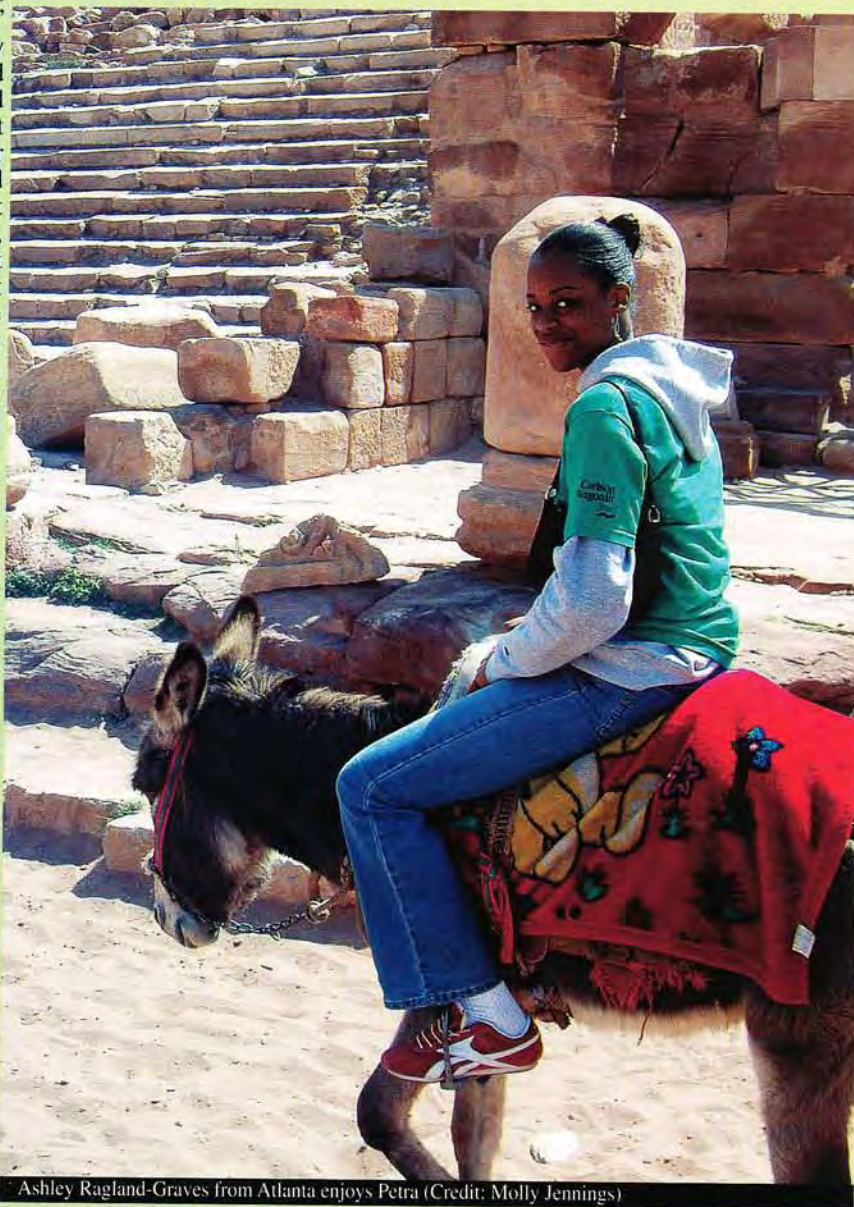
Janet Landry (Dallas)

Children crowded into barren classrooms, waiting in line as insufficient school supplies were divided among them. Since I had returned from my first session of Beyond Borders in Maine, images like these were constantly on the news, with headlines like "Conditions in Iraq Getting Worse" and "Schools Short on Supplies." They reminded me of Shahad, Deema, and Noor, three Iraqi girls I had befriended in Maine. I recalled their accounts about how dangerous life was for students our age living in Iraq, and how they risked their lives to attend school. Before I met Deema, who was in my dialogue group, these news bulletins were tragic, but somehow hadn't truly affected me. But after becoming such close friends these girls, I found myself constantly worrying about them in this violent environment, risking their lives to go to school, only to be met with inadequate supplies. Immediately, I thought of how much my school had, and wanted to share this with them.

To our fortune, Beyond Borders paired the Dallas delegation and the Iraqi delegation. Our goal was to work together on a project, to present at our second meeting in Jordan. I proposed the idea to the Dallas and Iraq delegations, and thus Books for Baghdad was conceived. I contacted Eva Gordon, the program coordinator, to see if this idea would work and she was amazingly supportive. It was originally set up as a way to gather some books to send over to Iraq. Since then, however, it has grown tremendously by the ambition and determination of the Dallas delegation, and also by the incredible support of our communities and fellow Beyond Borders participants from Dallas. For example, Samantha Richey has gathered, with the generous help of her school, loads of school supplies to be shipped to Iraq. I proposed the idea to my school's Key Club, and its members have donated over 200 books, ranging from novels to children's books. Casey Zager has supplied entire sets of middle school-level books for our project, and Autumn Reeves has set up numerous book drops in libraries around her hometown for Books for Baghdad.

Eva and the rest of the Seeds of Peace staff are helping us to ship these books and supplies to Iraq, and we hope to send them out soon. This project has grown beyond

our original plans, and we hope it continues to do so. We see it as a continuous project that could grow to include other learning guides and materials needed in Iraq. After Noor's touching slideshow in Jordan that reminded us of how horrific the environment in Iraq still is, the Dallas delegation was even more motivated in our tenacity to help our sister city.



Ashley Ragland-Graves from Atlanta enjoys Petra (Credit: Molly Jennings)



Beyond Borders

Community Service

Since the beginning of 2005, Seeds of Peace have been increasing their community service involvement. With help from staff or completely on their own, Seeds have shown their communities with their actions what it means to be a Seed

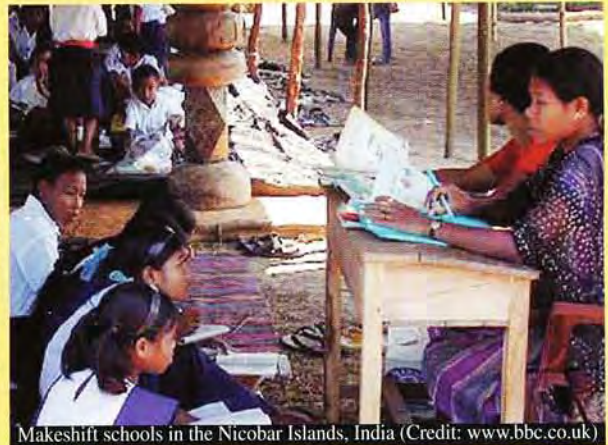
Helping Tsunami Victims Ibrar Chaudhry (Lahore)

It was January 2, 2005. We Pakistani Seeds were enjoying a workshop with Marieke, Jen and Bill. At the last moment of the workshop, Neeta, a Pakistani Seed, made the group realize the horror of the tsunami disaster that had occurred the previous week. Maybe it was a result of our three days of working together that made us take an oath, determined to help the victims, using the platform of SOP.

On the very next day, I went to my principal for permission to raise funds for tsunami relief. He appreciated the idea and permitted me to do so. With the assistance of Ahmad Ali Babar, another Pakistani Seed from 2004, I made a speech for the fund we

created. The best thing about our fundraising was that we asked children to give their pocket money. There was no need to ask their parents (as students of our middle- and lower-class schools usually do). The students knew us well so they trusted us, and in a week we were able to collect 10,000 Pakistani rupees (about \$180). It was a big achievement indeed. People have trust in SOP and I think this was a big turning point.

The purpose of writing about this is make clear that SOP is a strong platform for doing something meaningful in our societies. People have many plans but they do not have necessarily



Makeshift schools in the Nicobar Islands, India (Credit: www.bbc.co.uk)

have a platform, but SOP is a strong one, teaching us the value of community service and how to contribute to our society.

Building Community in Tiv'on Gilad Lavie (Tiv'on) and Yael Meretyk (Tiv'on)

What is "Rakya?"

In Hebrew, the letters in the word Rakya stand for "Rokmin Ksharim bein Yehudim ve'Aravim," which means establishing connections between Jews and Arabs. It all started when we came back from camp and thought about how we could bring to our community the experience that we had been through.

We didn't want this to be a regular project; we wanted something different, a project that would make a real difference. It took us some time until we thought of Rakya, a project to bring together 100 third graders from Kiryat Ti'von, our town, and Ka'abia, a Bedouin village.

We got a lot of enthusiastic feedback. Seeds of Peace supported us by giving us materials, money and advice. We recruited six students from our school to help us plan and guide the project.

The first two meetings were great. The kids loved our activities, fit together wonderfully and showed great enthusiasm for the future. They were so happy to hear that there will

be more meetings. The cooperation between the kids was amazing; they saw that the "other side" is just like them.

When we saw the smiles on their faces we felt that we fulfilled the mission; that we succeeded in taking what we have passed through the camp and bringing it to our community. The Rakya project is our proof that, "if you will it, it is no dream." We have planned three more meetings until the end of the school year, one each month. Our hope is that the project will grow with the kids. We believe that future Seeds will join Rakya and turn our hope into reality. Not many people get to build and guide such a project. We feel very special and we would like to thank everybody for their help and support.



Third-graders from Ka'abia and Tiv'on participate in a Rakya program (Credit: Yara Sarussi)

around the World

Volunteering at the Eiman Boarding School

Hazar Abd al-Razek (Taybeh)

As a girl who grew up in a loving family, I feel that every child has the right to feel safe and belong to a family that gives him coziness, love, and respect. From a young age, I have been eager to make a difference by achieving my dream – “drawing a smile on a child face.”



Hazar Abd al-Razek and Mariam Haj Yehia participate in an SOP program (Credit: Walid Abed ElHadi)

In one of the meetings of the Triangle Seeds, an idea for an interesting project came up: volunteering in a boarding school. This school, located in Taybeh, is called the Eiman Boarding School. It serves young children aged from 5-17 who are orphans or suffer from socioeconomic problems. The school provides for children who can go to a regular school in the morning and return at noon, to get help with their homework, receive good food and clean shelter for sleeping.

I was attracted to the idea of volunteering in a boarding school mainly because it was the first step toward achieving my dream. I decided to take action by meeting the manager of the school to represent our willingness to help. The staff explained to us the do's and don'ts of volunteer work there. Together, the manager and the volunteers planned an active schedule that includes plenty of exciting activities, such

as a sports day, educational games and arts.

The first day of volunteering there was a success. We, the volunteers, introduced ourselves through interesting activities. Even the crew participated and enjoyed that day. We left a positive impression on the children and the staff.

In the future, we have many plans. We will go there twice a month, and divide the children into small groups to be more effective. Over the summer, we plan to renovate some of the facilities, like painting the school's walls and decorating the rooms. There is also a possibility to join them on some of their trips.

I want to thank the Triangle Seeds from Taybeh, Jatt and Tira for helping me, and giving me this opportunity to achieve my dream.

Visit to Rehabilitation Center in Ramallah

Nada Enab (Ramallah)

On March 18th, my SOP dialogue group from Ramallah went to visit the Abu-Raya Rehabilitation Center in Ramallah. This center emerged in response to an increase in the spinal cord injuries during the Intifada. We went there to visit the patients, get closer to our society and know more about the patients' problems, and tell them about Seeds of Peace and our camp experience.



A patient at the Abu-Raya Rehabilitation Center talks to Ramallah Seeds (Credit: Ruba Musleh)

When we first got there we were kind of scared because we didn't know how to act or talk, but that was only in the beginning. We visited some of the patients and gave them some small gifts from the group, to make them feel little bit better. When we spoke with them they told us about their stories and their problems, and it was nice to listen to them and be able to understand the situations that they were going through. We felt very sorry for their situation.

For our sake and theirs, I have learned to keep a smile on my face, despite the hard situations that we are going through together.



Seeds planting seeds (Credit: Tamara Qaraquee)

Preparing the Beit Jala Municipality Park Bethlehem Seeds

On Friday, March 18, we held our first community service activity, cleaning the park of the Beit Jala Municipality. The activity was supposed to be from 11:00 A.M. until 1:00 P.M., but instead of volunteering for two hours we did double; we worked for four hours because it was an exciting activity: we had fun and worked at the same time.

This park, part of the Beit Jala Municipality, was established by foreign donations. Many people, especially children, come there. We realized it's necessary to help the Municipality to prepare the park for its opening day, Monday, March 21.

When we arrived at the site, we were informed of the jobs that we had to do. We divided into groups and each group had a specific task: removing unnecessary grass, planting flowers,

clipping the branches of the trees and much more. We had a great time and we had the best Seed manager, Tamara Qaraquee, who leads activities for the Bethlehem Seeds. We hope to continue these activities that our communities need.



Bethlehem Seeds prepare the park before its opening (Credit: Tamara Qaraquee)



Survivors in Malaysia (Credit: www.cnn.com)

Tsunami Disaster Radha Sampath Kumar (Mumbai)

This message was posted on to the SeedsNet listserve on December 27, 2004

Tsunami: the word itself gives rise to fear in our minds and hearts. The tsunami tidal waves were no doubt extremely destructive. This was proved by the disaster that occurred on 26th December 2004. It was an event none of us can forget. This tidal tragedy was so intense that it destroyed acres and acres of land at a stretch in minutes. It measured 9.0 on the Richter scale.

These tsunami waves were found to have originated near the Sumatra islands. It has led to the death of people and severe damage to the coastal areas of the countries affected by it. These waves mainly struck the South Asian and African countries. Some people were fortunate to have survived these

waves, but others were not so lucky. Some families are mourning the death of their young ones while some are still searching for some trace of their loved ones. In India, these waves caused destruction mainly in the southern parts. The Andaman and Nicobar Islands were completely washed away due to this calamity. Thousands and thousands of people have lost their homes and families. They have no place to live, no food to eat, nowhere to go! They are in a state of helplessness. Some people have victorious stories of survival while many families have tragic stories of death.

A victorious story of survival is the story of Michael Mangal. In Port Blair, a victim of the tsunami was rescued after surviving for 26 days on a partially submerged island in India's Andaman and Nicobar archipelago, the officials of the Indian Navy said. Michael Mangal, a Nicobarese tribesman who had been living on coconuts since the December 26th disaster, was spotted waving a cloth flag made from his clothes by a joint navy and civilian search and rescue team. The team spotted him waving a stick flag on Pillow Panja Island. He was exhausted and weak when the rescue team brought him back to Port Blair. Mangal was sucked into the sea when the first tsunami wave retreated, but a second wave dumped him back on the shore. Mangal, who was slightly injured, told the rescue team that he had searched for the people from his devastated village but was afraid no one had survived. He said he sat on a tree for several days and nights, as he was afraid of being "swallowed by the ocean."

The people affected by this calamity are facing problems such as malnutrition, which is a growing problem among tsunami survivors, with high prices and poor quality food leaving many vulnerable to sickness. Sporadic cases of chicken pox have been reported among children accommodated in shelters for tsunami victims in Nagapattinam.

People from all over the world have provided help in whatever way they can. This is indeed the feeling of humanity and concern that flows through the hearts of every person, no matter their religion, nationality, caste, creed, etc. Countries from all over the world have united together to help those who were affected by this tidal tragedy. Many countries have helped the affected nations by providing medical and financial aid. Many have also collected money for the re-building of houses that were washed away while others have provided support to overcome the loss. At this moment, a proverb comes to my mind: "In times of prosperity friends will be plenty; but in times of adversity not one among twenty." But in the aftermath of the tsunami, this proverb has been proved wrong. The various countries of the world seem to be helping each other in times of adversity such as the tsunami tidal disaster but in times of prosperity and happiness, they seem to be behaving as strangers. During crisis, everyone lends a helping hand but as soon as the crisis is over, personal considerations become more important and people begin to neglect the interests of others. People of different religions and nationalities are helping each other irrespective of their conflicts and differences. If this friendly attitude of people all over the world continues to prevail, then wars and

riots will disappear forever. If the countries of the world continue to be such helpful nature then where is the place for war and hatred?

I hope that the souls of the people who died in the tsunami disaster rest in peace forever.



Survivors search through the rubble in Aurang, Andaman Islands, India (Credit: www.bbc.co.uk)

tsunami



A ruined village in Sumatra (Credit: US Navy - Public Domain)

Responding to Tragedy

Nazaqat Lal (Mumbai)

No one would have suspected that such a festive Christmas celebration could bring forth such a disastrous morning. Within minutes, the menacing waves had reduced entire cities to ramshackle huts, killed thousands of people and ruined everything in their path. The waves washed away dreams, hopes, lives and all that they possibly could; leaving behind only despair. Give it a thought: If you returned home one day and saw that the place you had once called home no longer existed, your loved ones lost, and you, left abandoned to face the world, with no one to turn to for comfort or any kind of security . . . just the thought of it is so frightening I don't even want to begin to imagine; so think of those who experienced it!

There was an article about one of the survivors of the tsunami that tremendously moved me. It was about a woman, with her two children, who was engulfed in a wave, and her only means of support was a palm tree. It was impossible for her to protect both, her children and herself. She was forced to choose between the two children as she could only protect one of them, and she chose to protect the younger one. She actually allowed her elder child to be washed away by the cruel waves in front of her own eyes. Luckily, the elder child did survive. It must have been heart-rending for the mother to choose between her own children, and for the elder boy to know that his mother chose his sibling over him.

Our school attended a charity viewing of the movie 'Black' and raised funds to help the tsunami victims. Our contributions were not solely made to buy them new lives, but

rather to help them to rebuild the lives they had lost to the tsunami. It was with these intentions that we donated generously to the tsunami relief fund and we hoped that with our help the victims would soon be able to regain what they had lost, not fully dependent on us for aid, but more on themselves for the confidence and self belief which was needed to rebuild their broken lives.

A few days after the tsunami, India and Pakistan played a cricket match, and the Pakistani cricketers gave more than 50% of their salaries to help the tsunami victims. The constant and tremendous support from the world community strengthened my belief in peace and unity. During the tsunami, the nationality of the victims really didn't matter. All that mattered was that the victims were human and needed help.

TIDES OF FATE

*A monster wave lashed the shore,
Many a shack and mansion it tore.
It let out heart-rending roars,
As if to settle its remaining scores.
It washed away so many lives,
Fathers, sisters and pregnant wives.
Drowned beneath the waves,
Were kings and peasants,
Bearing a destruction site so unpleasant.
It took away a Hindu and a Christian,
A Jew, Muslim and Zoroastrian.
Did it even think twice?
Before it washed away,*

*Gold coins, mansions and fields of rice?
Submerged in it,
Was the land for which we fought,
Every human mind was frozen with thought.
What did we gain from this ruthless massacre?
Barren, destroyed soil surfacing every acre?
All is lost wealth and land,
Now we beg nations for a helping hand.
Whatever we wanted till yesterday,
Mother Nature washed it away.
But we know we are punished for our greed,
For fighting for land more than we need.
For chasing materialistic wealth,
Instead of human life and health.*

*We parted families and divided lands,
Crushed bodies and severed human hands.
And now we suffer the wrath of nature's fury,
That took away our much-wanted glory.
Oh! You ungrateful human!
Believe in the almighty lord,
Remember that you cannot afford,
To take away so many lives,
With those weapons and blood-bathed knives!!*

Divya Moorjaney (Mumbai)

Dialogue across the Border:

A Full Program for Indian and Pakistani Seeds

Changing Mindsets, One Student at a Time Amina Ali (Lahore)

If you are a Seed and you are planning a school presentation, here are some things to prepare for:

Rude answers
Angry looks
Yells of disapproval

But you sometimes may get a nod of agreement.

I am a 2004 Pakistani Seed. When I attended a meeting to prepare for my first school presentation, I found myself in a very complicated situation: convincing youngsters who had not actually seen or felt the 'other side'; youngsters who had been brainwashed from the very beginning with groundless stereotypes. The thought of giving new ideas seemed very tough.



The presentation, however, did go well. At times, I saw the high school students agreeing with what I was saying and they began to seriously analyze facts, which was, indeed, a great achievement.

Sometimes, we Seeds saw ourselves facing things we did not even think about. While at times everything seemed to be turning out just perfect, a sudden question or

comment would make us felt clueless. There were pupils who seemed interested in what we were saying, some did not even want to listen to us but were constantly bombarding us with questions and some absolutely agreed.

At the end of our second presentation, in a school named Lady MacLiggion, a girl in about 10th grade came up to me and said, "I totally agree with you guys. If we won't look out our pasts, we will never be able to make peace with Indians. And peace is what matters." A rush of happiness sprang through my body at these words. I felt that we finally succeeded in conveying something and that some of the pupils did believe that we were not brainwashed.

Changing the mindsets of people who have certain ideas since the very beginning is not an easy task. However, changing these ideas has slowly taken place, and I am proud to be part of this change.

Facing the Issues: Economic and Gender Disparities Ayyaz Ahmad (Lahore)

I always wonder about the things we learn. Do we learn new things about the world, or do we just realize that we already have them within ourselves? Do we stop living in a dream world and learn to be realistic, or do we stop being rational and let nature follow its course by ignoring all the problems in the world?

To be honest I am as confused as anyone. Seeds of Peace showed me my ignorance, made me realize how much I still have to learn and realize. But I guess that change wasn't permanent, or maybe it was and I had started to ignore it because I find myself no wiser than before.

Six months after camp, I had done some

school presentations and attended monthly meetings, but was looking forward to something far more constructive. The workshop in Lahore in January covered an interesting subject: economic and gender disparity among Pakistani Seeds. I was wondering what we would say on this. It turned out that we had a lot to say.

It is amazing how much you learn in such workshops. How much you realize about yourself and others as well. No matter how much you deny the impact it is always there. You learn how interdependent everyone is. You learn how the action of one affects the other even if it was unintentional. In terms of economic disparity, one can clearly see how a person from an inferior class feels when a person from a slightly higher class does something to hurt him, even if it is unintentional or jokingly.

Gender disparity is also widespread throughout the world. There are two sides to every story and it was the same case here, in Lahore. Boys were unaware about how girls felt and girls were unaware about how boys felt on this issue. The issues did get discussed, face to face. When I speak for myself I don't know if it brought a change in us or not, but better to face the problem than to ignore it.



Pakistani Seeds participate in a gender fishbowl activity
(Credit: Marijke van Woerlom)

Indian and Pakistani workshops, seminars and school presentations aim to teach both Seeds and non-Seeds about the organization and to humanize the other side. With a long border separating the two sides, they nevertheless find ways to communicate and answer each other's questions

Across the Border by Video Teju Javeri (Mumbai)

Karjat is a small hill station about 3-4 hours away from Mumbai, where I live. It's a really beautiful place, and it is over here that we, the Indian delegation (along with Feruzan Mehta, our regional director), come for our Seeds of Peace seminars during the year. The main goal of this last seminar was to plan the "Bring A Friend" workshop that was to take place once we returned to Mumbai. We spent a lot of time discussing our expectations of the workshop. All of us hoped that our respective friends would walk out of the workshop with a slightly changed opinion of Pakistanis, and with a feeling of contentment at having attended it. We wanted them to have a good time, and to gain something from the experience. It was also important for us to make our friends realize that Seeds of Peace isn't only about visiting the US, but that it has a deeper purpose - peace and continuing dialogue.

We participated in various activities. In one of them, we had to build human sculptures depicting various questions the Pakistanis had asked us during camp. One group would form the sculpture, while the other group would interpret it. It was remarkable how even in such a small group so many

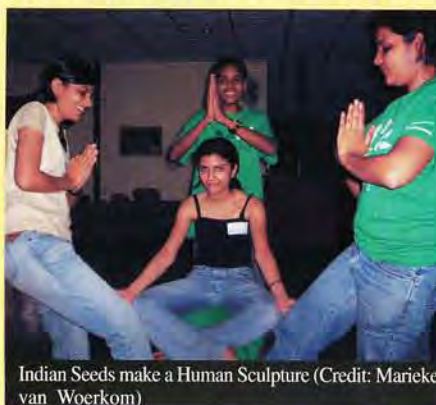
interpretations could be put forward by people. In the evening the entire delegation came together, and we took part in similar activities. After dinner, there was a small "impromptu" (otherwise known as crazy) entertainment program. We sang songs we had made up or learned from our staff - Jen, Bill, Marieke and Meenakshi.

Next morning, we were going to help our friends create a videotape with questions they wished to ask the Pakistanis. The friends of the Pakistani Seeds would answer these queries that we had. We were also supposed to make a tape in which we would speak of the similarities between Indians and Pakistanis that we had

discovered at camp. Various prejudices that we had about Pakistanis before camp, some of which were alleviated after dialogue, were to be discussed on the tape. We were also to talk of the experiences we had in Pakistan during our home stays there. We spent the entire morning deciding what we would record, and how we would initiate discussions to help our friends choose their questions.

This entire experience was incredible. It was wonderful how one idea grew out of another, how we began to listen to each other and cooperate. I felt that it brought us closer together as a group of friends. All this time, the 2001 Seeds had been planning the activities for the first half of the workshop, to be based on discussions about various issues relating to the two countries, like the Partition, religion and society. After some changes, we came up with a concrete plan of action that was both interesting and interactive.

I really hope that our subsequent meetings are as successful, that we manage to take the "Bring A Friend" workshop further, and spread the message of Seeds of Peace to more and more people on the subcontinent. *(Editor's Note: to see one Pakistani's response to the tape, read the article below)*



Indian Seeds make a Human Sculpture (Credit: Marieke van Woerkom)

Joining Hands For Peace Sara Pervaiz (Lahore)

Arriving considerably late for the Seeds of Peace workshop that my friend Neeta had invited me to, I ran toward the rooms in which all the Seeds were seated. Confused to see the countless pairs of shoes that lined the entrance, I stepped in. I looked around nervously, hoping to find Neeta sitting in any one of the two groups of children in the room. (All I could gather in such a hustle was that they were talking about India and Pakistan).

What started off in haste and uncertainty soon became one of the most enlightening and enjoyable experiences. I was welcomed into the group and soon became a part of the discussion. After a delicious lunch, we were shown a tape that had been sent by Seeds across the border. *(see article above)* They had asked various questions and voiced their opinions regarding Pakistan. Our task was to divide into smaller groups and to prepare answers to those questions.

I thoroughly enjoyed working with people whom I had not met before. I had never been a part of such an activity in which, being a teenager, my opinions regarding the Indo-Pak conflict actually mattered. I realized that I did not have adequate knowledge about the conflict and had wrongly believed that the Indians were an unreasonable enemy that would never accept peace. Before watching the tape, we

when we thought of an Indian. After we had seen the tape, we made another similar list of words. Surprisingly, the two lists contradicted each other. (The first list contained words such as enemy, cruel, unfriendly while, the second list consisted of words such as kind, friendly and neighbourly). This difference was visible not only on paper but, in fact, reflected a layman's views before and after watching the tape sent in by Indian children.

The tape bridged a communication gap between the youth of the two countries. I, for one, had never heard that an Indian could desire peace. It made me realise how manipulative the media is and how it can actually mould a nation's psyche. A true picture is never portrayed and politicians maneuver the entire nation's ideology. It's funny how people on both sides wish for peace but are forced into believing otherwise. It makes one wonder whether the conflict really does exist or it's all propaganda. This workshop inspired me to search for "the truth" (if that's what you'd like to call it). I soon learned that the history we are familiar with is also biased and even the textbooks at school do not present "a true picture." This hatred has been fed to us and we have grown up with a bias toward our neighbours. Very few people have the audacity to actually question such beliefs - since people don't have access to "the truth" (i.e. the real facts), they never get an opportunity to do so either.

provide an "access to the truth" by giving youth on both sides of the border, a chance to interact with each other in a healthy environment, hence broadening their horizons and eliminating biased thinking - it aids youth in rightly analyzing their history and then forming beliefs regarding such complex and sensitive issues. Though skeptics may say that such efforts are practically useless, I believe that they provide an opportunity for personal growth.



Indian Seeds participate in a workshop exercise (Credit: Marieke van Woerkom)

Afghan Seeds held a Leaderships Skills Workshop and Bring-a-Friend activity in early 2005, giving Seeds the opportunity to learn how to be leaders, introduce their friends to the organization and have frank dialogue about the problems they want to tackle together

Two Kinds of Green Ahmad Hemmat Shah (Kabul)

Every person has a favorite color, but almost every Seed likes green because of the color of the T-shirts they wear at camp, the color of the soccer fields, the color of the environment where Seeds find themselves anew, where they are encouraged to speak for peace; to make the dream of world citizens come true.

But there is a different green in this world: the poppy plant, a green plant with a nice purple flower which unfortunately has dangerous effects on the world: it is the source of opium, which is the main ingredient in many illegal narcotics, such as heroin. Poppy cultivation is a world enemy, after terrorism, and almost every part of the world suffers from it. But it is very different in my country, Afghanistan, because here is the center for poppy cultivation, just as it was used as the center of terrorism, by people who don't work against our country but against the entire world. These people encourage people to cultivate poppies, which are green in color, and use it against my country.

Seeds of Peace deals with a different green. Seeds of Peace trains its green-wearing members to work for their countries and the world, to achieve their hopes and dreams and those shared by those

people who seek all that is good, peaceful and hopeful. Both are green, both are seeds, but work to achieve completely opposite goals.



Afghan Seeds plan their Bring-a-Friend activity (Credit: Mir Akhgar)

Learning Leadership Skills Wahid Merzaiy (Kabul)

As a part of the SOP follow-up program, we had a workshop in Kabul with Seeds of Peace staff members Marieke, Zach, Sayarah, Feruzan and Jawed, the new SOP coordinator in Afghanistan. We were glad to have had a workshop in Kabul after such a long time without one. We worked very hard in this workshop for two days. The

Afghan Seeds had a special interest in this workshop in order to learn the leadership skills. We were taught a variety of skills focusing on how to carry out our mission more effectively.

We were first introduced to each other, as most of us are from different years and were not familiar with each other. We were taught how to be a leader and a follower at the same time, and learned how important

it is to be good listeners as well as good speakers. The workshop gave us a chance to analyze how different images depict various messages and can be interpreted differently. We also discussed the social and political issues that encompass our lives and how to combine these issues with the Seeds of Peace spirit, to make people aware of our efforts. Through role-

playing, we presented the basic problems in our community and society. The most touching part of workshop was when all of the participants shared their memories from camp and we realized how greatly Seeds of Peace had affected them and how they themselves had become an integral part of Seeds of Peace.

It was a great experience for Afghan Seeds to be learn how to leaders. I can only hope we can use these skills to end the continual war, bad blood, hypocrisy and fratricide that plague this country of ours.



Seeds Abida and Sapna with their parents (Credit: Mir Akhgar)





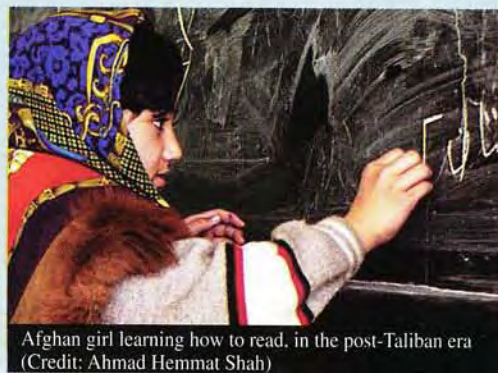
Violation of Human Rights in Afghanistan

Mahmood Sayedi (Kabul)

Humans are naturally born free, and have the right to freedom of movement. Unfortunately, in the past two decades, attention was not paid to these kinds of rights in Afghanistan. The most important way a country can grant equal rights to all its members is through a constitution. In Afghanistan, we now have a constitution but no one is respecting it. Violence has been one of the most unacceptable things for Afghan citizens. There is much violence against the needy and defenseless members of society here.



This problem is especially noticeable for women. It is very hard for them to defend their rights and freedom. In Afghanistan, women are like slaves who work all day. Many are not even allowed to go outside of the house. But some politicians and active women who work in government didn't stop their efforts to achieve their rights. They raised their voices to reduce violence against them. But this is still hard; after some female politicians tried to defend their rights, they received death threats. Yet they have not stopped their striving, because they hope they will succeed. There is a path to the top of even the highest mountain.



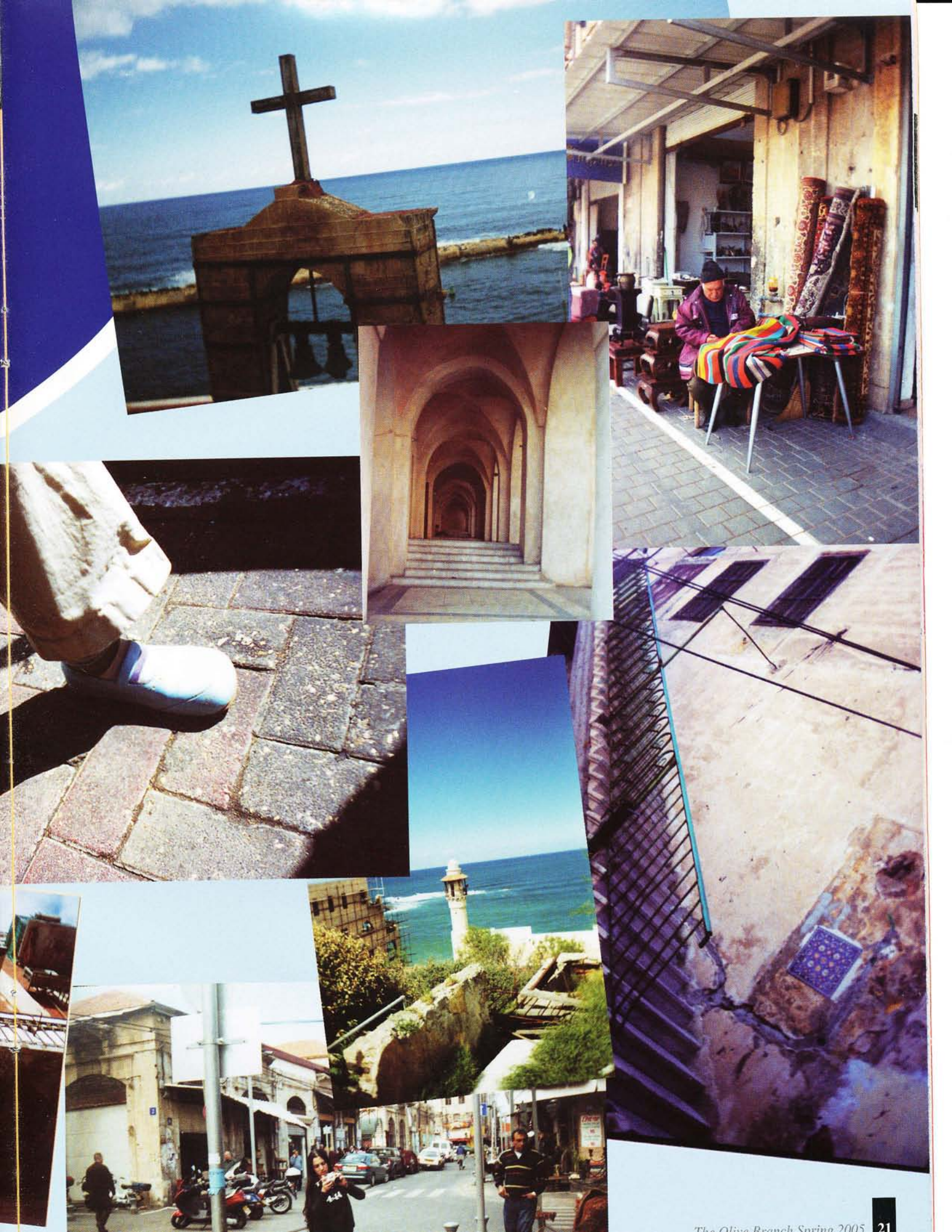
Afghan girl learning how to read, in the post-Taliban era
(Credit: Ahmad Hemmat Shah)

An Afternoon in Jaffa

Arab and Jewish Seeds discover its squares, alleys, marketplaces and views

Photographers: Ziad Arow, Omer Duvdevani, Adi Finkelstein, Sagi Ganot, Miri Gorohovsky, Mohamed Haj Yehia, Rani Haj Yehia, Hiba Jbara, Lior Lechizki, Sami Massarwi, Dror Rochberger, Shani Shemesh, Tal Tsarfaty, Yael Uri





What's going on in the Middle East ?

מה קורה במזרח התיכון?
ماذا يحدث في الشرق الأوسط؟

Meeting my Neighbors Ibarhim Abu Arafah (Jerusalem)

During the Neighbors Seminar at the close of 2004, it was such a wonderful experience



One way to build trust between neighbors (Credit: Khaled Khoury)

to live like we did at camp, and to meet those people who clearly affected our own lives and gave us something special. It was also amazing to meet some older Seeds. We continued what we had started at camp and developed all what we had learned. We participated in activities that brought us together, to trust each other and have productive dialogue.

At this seminar, we held a dialogue about our neighbors, and discussed how we define this word. At the beginning I thought that the word "neighbor" described all the people with whom we get in touch, regardless of whether they are close to us or not, and this definition includes all the people around us, even if in a very small part. Soon I realized that there is another definition for the word. Neighbors are the people who are close to us, the people that we trust and love, the people that are involved clearly in our life and can never be forgotten. Many definitions can exist for one thing; they all describe the same thing but from different viewpoints.

We did not only discuss what the word "neighbors" means, but also how to interact with them. There are many people who are involved in our life, either in all or part, and we should work to improve these relationships. We should always try to make the people around us feel that we are close to them. This process commences when we try to understand others, and when we use all the skills we have to communicate our ideas in the best possible way. To strengthen these concepts, during the seminar we held

different discussions and played a number of games, so that we could learn to trust and become more understanding of people that we wouldn't necessarily trust or be close with – whether they are Israelis or Palestinians, younger or older.

After the seminar, I realized that when we work to improve our relationships with others, then we will really have close neighbors.



Wes and Ariel jam with Seeds (Credit: Khaled Khoury)

Seminar for Triangle and Galilee Seeds Lian Saaid (Akka) and Rami Tibi (Taybeh)

As Arabs in Israel, or Palestinians living in Israel, we usually find ourselves caught in the middle. We kind of lack a definition and our identity is not clear to most of us. Trying to be neutral means avoiding the matter and choosing a side might lead you to lose some of your friends. The whole idea of a seminar for the Seeds of the Galilee and Triangle was for us to meet and talk about those subjects that we constantly deal with. Starting with us as a minority in this country, our rights and what we think can be improved, we had discussions about our language and our culture, our social life and our hopes and expectations.

We as Seeds realize that our job does not end by meeting in the woods of Maine or in Bring-a-Friend meetings. We also must give back to the community. We used this seminar to discuss matters that concern the



Arab society in Israel not politically, but socially, by introducing projects already held and planning others which can promote these goals.

Our seminar was held in Nazareth, and Arab Seeds from Israel who had attended camp over the past three years participated. The program included group discussions, walks in the streets in Nazareth over the Easter holiday, evening programs and shows, and our own favorite, free time!

This seminar was quite a success but we needed more time. A lot of us felt like the three days of this seminar were not enough. There is much more to discuss and do, and I hope we get a chance to do so.

Seminars, seminars and more seminars! Palestinians, Israelis, Egyptians, Jordanians and Moroccans all participated in various workshops, seminars and meetings to learn new skills, discuss burning issues and enjoy themselves



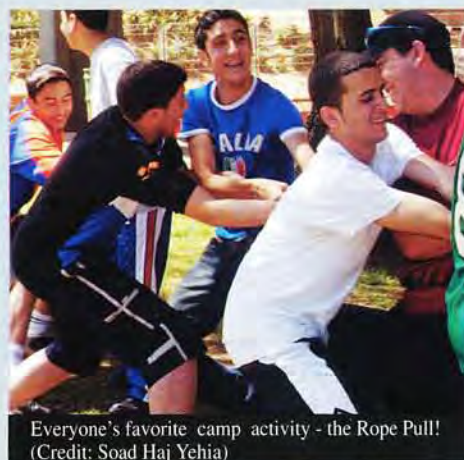
Seeds and Sports Soad Haj Yehia (Taybeh)

Since I love sports, I took responsibility for the Sports Day that was held at the Wingate Institute in Netanya at the

beginning of April. In addition to the fun and sports, the purpose was of the activity was to gather Arab Israelis, Palestinians and Israelis in one place to recreate some camp sports memories and experiences.

As soon as we finished the awesome sports day, I saw how energetic and enthusiastic the Seeds were. It was a tremendous success to have brought Palestinians, Israelis and Arab Israelis together to play sports and get back some of the camp spirit. During the sports day, people got to see old friends and meet new Seeds. Over the course of the morning we played sports such as basketball, volleyball and soccer. Our rope pull was the activity that reminded me most of camp (see picture!)

Although Seeds made the preparations for the activity, I want to thank the SOP staff tremendously for helping us during the course of the day. Special thanks go to all



Everyone's favorite camp activity - the Rope Pull!
(Credit: Soad Haj Yehia)

the Seeds who participated and made this unique day a successful one.

An Overdue 2002 Reunion Mirit Gorohovsky (Ashdod)

One moment I was at camp with all of my 2002 friends, and the next - three years later, I'm sitting at home wondering what happened to most of them?

So I decided I have to find out. Thoughts of a reunion flashed before my eyes.

I and my team - Lionel from Ashdod - had meetings, planned the activities, sent invitations and made the preparations for our reunion.

Three months later, with great help of the staff, I found myself in Sde Boker, with 17 of my 2002 friends, talking about our past, present and future in SOP.

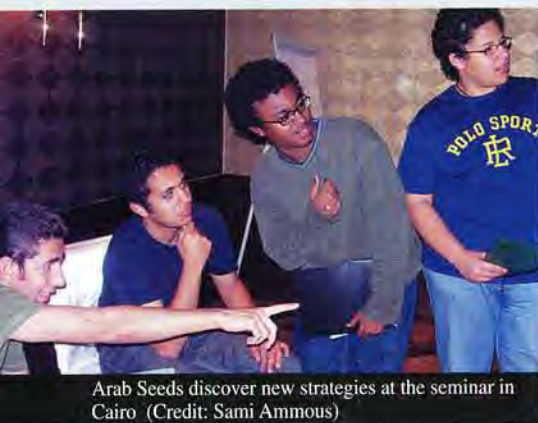


Shahar, Ron and Avi enjoy good company and refreshment in Sde Boker (Credit: Adar Ziegel)

What's going on in the Middle East ?

מה קורה במזרח התיכון?

ماذا يحدث في الشرق الأوسط؟



Arab Seeds discover new strategies at the seminar in Cairo (Credit: Sami Ammous)

Diffuse the Smile Charaf al-Mansouri (Casablanca)

What an honor it was to attend the Civil Rights Seminar, bringing together schools from Jordan, Egypt, and Morocco. I had a cultural shock when I first walked in the packed streets of Cairo. I thought Casablanca was as big as it got - well, I was wrong. Cairo is a city of an estimated 18 million, and compared to that, Casablanca is a small neighborhood. When it comes to language, I must say English

saved my life, because I had a hard time ordering in a restaurant in Arabic. But looking past this barrier, which can be passed with just a little motivation anywhere in the world, I learned a lot in Egypt: a lot about Egypt, a lot about its people, about civil rights, and about myself.

They were three long workshop days, and very intensive too, but they were definitely worth it, and were led by an exceptional man, Steve Wessler, founder of the Center for the Prevention of Hate Violence. From the workshops, this is what I learned: Words are the contemporary world's weapons of mass destruction, or distraction. Think about it, and take a moment to think before you let it slip off your tongue so easily. Yeah, she's black, does that make her inferior to you? Are you going to join in to the senseless belief that the range of darkness of a person's skin determines the respect they should be getting? Lunacy! Also, is it not "cool" today to be overweight, Arab, black, Muslim, work hard, have glasses, not have a 90-60-90 body shape, or not wear "standard" teenage clothes? Sadly, as some push their way through to reach superficial ideals, they

destroy everything that is in their way, unless someone is there to wake them up.

That's where Unity Teams come in. Established in many schools in the United States, these groups of students help with intervention and mediation. You can create one, and help prevent these types of things that undermine the school spirit. If you don't feel like joining, then please, go say hi to someone you have never said hi to, go have lunch with someone who always eats alone, "diffuse" your smile. Don't do this because you are asked to, do this because you want to.

In addition to this, we just had a great time at the seminar. The improvised karaoke night was a blast, and although we weren't great singers, we put the life right back into that empty dining hall. The boat ride on the Nile was really nice too, and we got to know each other more. I will never forget running for safety when we got close to the bridges.

To bring the message to you all who are reading: *Diffuse the Smile*.

Civil Rights - for Seeds and non-Seeds Irit Shterenberg (Eilat)

The Seeds of Peace Civil Rights/Unity Team seminar, held in Jerusalem at the end of February, was the first SOP activity I ever participated in. Even though I've heard many positive personal opinions of teenagers and adults who attended other seminars, meetings and camps, it never occurred to me that the experience would be so fascinating.

The lessons, subjects and ideas brought to discussion in incredibly unique groups truly equipped the participants - students and teachers as one - with tools and skills, enabling and encouraging the fight against violence and discrimination in schools all over Israel and Palestine. The seminar in Tantur, Jerusalem made us realize that prejudice, stereotypes and bias have a

bigger effect on people than we can truly know. We discussed how hurtful words can be, how we can stop harassment from happening and how we can make the people who are different from us feel like a part of the group. What was most effective at the seminar was the open and honest contact and communication between people of completely different

backgrounds, who see the other side as their enemies.

Basic empathy and respect, which appeared to exist only out of politeness in the beginning, turned into sympathy and appreciation - only in 3 days - which is a rather remarkable achievement, both for the participants and the Seeds of Peace organization.

After the experience, and after seeing a small part of Seeds of Peace's active, innovative and interesting program, I was impressed by the organization and the seminar. I can assure my future interest and involvement in other activities, and I personally am more than interested to contribute, by persuading people of the importance of this open-minded approach toward world problems. I thank Seeds of Peace for the opportunity to learn how to make a difference.



Both Israelis and Palestinians, Seeds and non-Seeds discussed civil rights with each other (Credit: Mohamed Haj Yehia)

What Are You?

National, Religious and Ethnic Identity around the World

People around the world struggle to define themselves. The color of our skin, passport, religion – all of these things contribute to our self-definition. For many, however, this process is more difficult. Seeds from three different countries discuss how they define themselves, how their greater society defines them and the consequences

A Question of Boxes

Elizabeth Nguyen (Beavercreek)

With which ethnic group do you most identify with?

- ☐ Caucasian/White
- ☐ Asian/Pacific Islander
- ☐ African American
- ☐ Hispanic/Latino
- ☐ Native American

Presented with these absolute racial categories, my fist impulse is to kick and yell and scribble all over the impersonal form with my meticulously sharpened number 2 pencil, and whine that I happen to occupy two of those boxes and squishing me into one is not only impossible, but also mean. You are asking me to box up my cultural identity, categorize it, and name it by someone else's terms. To my little cousin Erin, white is a color; Irish is who she is. To me, Asian or Caucasian is an impossibility. I am both.

I am proud of my parts, proud of my colors, my brown and my white. But the boxes force me to choose one. So inevitably I pick Asian because I know that, practically, Asian gets me free college visits, special dinners, and "student of color" while white gets me none of those affirmative action perks. Each time I mark that box I get a little bit madder. Usually I ignore the madness. It's just a stupid, stupid box. I get annoyed, complain, and try to get over it.



I first met another half-Vietnamese, half-white person last summer. I wasn't surprised. There are a lot of American-Asian kids out there, though most of them don't live among the corn and soybean fields in Dayton, OH like I do. We talked for a long time about the conundrum of the boxes, about not being either or, but both, and about the 'where are you from' question (for me at least, 'what ethnicity are you' is more clear and therefore less likely to make me say Ohio and glare). We both felt the same sense of not completely belonging to either race. Surrounded by my cousins on my dad's side, I often feel lost as they slip easily between English slang and the lilting pitches of Vietnamese (mine is limited to my favorite dishes and 'Happy New Year!'). On my mother's side, I understand the language perfectly but my deep brown hair and almond eyes make me stand out among blues and blondes, greens and pale brunettes.

I'll never choose one part of me over the other. I can't and I won't, but the boxes don't stop trying to make me.

The Druze: An All-Around Glance

Shebil Mansour (Osafiya)

The Druze is an ethnic religion. Its members usually acclimate and identify with the



country in which they live. They expect to get fair treatment, and since there is no Druze country yet, most of its members are spread over Syria, Israel and Lebanon; some even claim that there is a fair percentage of Druze in Jordan. Druze have a strong community feeling, where they identify

themselves as related even across borders of countries, but they will never revolt or betray the country in which they live. The total number of Druze in the world is estimated to be around 2.5 million people.

Even though Druze are united, none of its members are told what to do or what to think in the political sphere. In Israel, about 85% of Druze serve in the army. Druze have many points of view about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the Druze in Israel are divided to into four ideological groups.

1) Druze who identify themselves as Druze Arab with an Israeli nationality bond: This is probably the biggest group of the four mentioned. Members of this group identify themselves as Arab Druze, with an Israeli nationality bond. They serve in the army and consider themselves legitimate Israeli citizens.

2) Druze who identify themselves as only Druze with an Israeli Nationality bond: This is the second biggest group in the Druze Israeli community. They tend to have a very strong bond to their Israeli

nationality; therefore, most members of this group serve in the army, and many of them enter special combat units.

3) Druze who identify themselves as Druze, with no nationality bond: These are the completely ethnic Druze, who are loyal to the country they live in. They do not support any side and most of them serve in the army.

4) Druze who identify themselves as Druze with a Palestinian nationality bond: Probably the group with the fewest members, these are Druze that identify with the Palestinian cause more than the Israeli cause. A large number prefer not to serve in combat units, and a number of them do not serve in the IDF at all.

The Druze community in Israel generally co-exists harmoniously with Israeli Jews. This does not mean, however, that Druze as a minority are treated the same as the Jewish majority. As a result, many young Druze are dissatisfied with this arrangement and are discouraged by the lack of equality.

What Are You?

National, Religious and Ethnic



The Ethiopian Community in Neve Yosef, Haifa, Israel
Akille Kebede (Haifa)

I came to live in the Neve Yosef neighborhood, which is located in eastern Haifa, with my brother and parents in the summer of 1993. My family was among the first few families in the neighborhood. When I was six years old, I started first grade at the local elementary school, Gavrieli. My brother and I were the first Ethiopian children ever to attend this school. We hardly knew any Hebrew, except for a one-month course for immigrants. The school director happily accepted us, but didn't know how to handle us. My father was warned that we should not cause any violence. During the first week, the children started calling us, "Kushi, Kushi" (literally "black," but in Hebrew it is understood to be a derogatory term) At first we didn't know the meaning, but we understood that it was an insult and came home crying. My parents explained us that the word means black, and that is true that we are black, but that we should be proud of our blackness

The next day they continued to call us, "Kushi, Kushi" so we answered back, "Sure we are black, so what?!" The children stopped calling us that, and I became friends with the schoolchildren, and remain friends with them to this day.

Ethiopian immigrants have a very strong Jewish identity, and at the same time we believe that we belong to this land, Israel,

We believe that we belong to this land, Israel, although we are different in color, culture and customs

although we are different in color, culture and customs. Many immigrants are illiterate or have little education, because the majority came from the Ethiopian countryside.

Native Israelis have difficulty in understanding the Ethiopians and our culture, and one of the main reasons for this is the little interaction between Israelis and Ethiopians. Ethiopian families tend to live in the same area and this limits interaction with other Israelis. Also, the unemployment rate of Ethiopian families is very high, and this also limits interactions in the workplace. Many native Israelis are prejudiced and think that Ethiopians have no capability to carry out tasks and are reluctant to hire them, even for manual labor.

On the other hand, there is better interaction between Ethiopian youth and native Israeli

youth. As a result, Ethiopian youth learn the language and the culture. But this interaction has not been enough for satisfactory integration between the groups. One of the main gaps is education. For many Israelis, their parents or tutors can offer their children academic help. But the majority of Ethiopian parents can't give the necessary assistance themselves or hire private teachers as most Israelis do. Therefore, many Ethiopian students become frustrated by the time they reach high school and drop out. As dropouts they can't get employment. They vent their frustration through negative behavior and only perpetuate the stereotypes that native Israelis have of the community as a whole.

Currently there are a number of programs that aim to improve the interaction between native Israelis and Ethiopian families, as well as educational problems. To improve family-to-family interactions there is a program called "Family Friendship" which is sponsored by the Haifa-Boston Connection, a partnership between Haifa and the Jewish community of Boston, Massachusetts. In this program, Ethiopian families are connected with a native Israeli family. There are also efforts to give after school help to elementary and high school students. The best example of this is the Neve Yosef Community Center. Children come to the center and get individual and group assistance by professional and volunteer teachers. Such an effort must be made in all Israeli neighborhoods to prevent the deterioration of Ethiopian youth.

The Muslim Experience in India Mehzabeen Palgharwala (Mumbai)

The partition of India in 1947 was one of the great human "convulsions" of history. In a few months, about twelve million people had crossed the western border that divided the state of Punjab. There were Muslims traveling to the newly created Pakistan, Hindus and Sikhs east to India. The new truncated India came to be a democratic, secular country, home to a diverse number of cultures and peoples.

Being a Muslim in India has its own positive and negative aspects. Living in a cosmopolitan city like Bombay (Mumbai), I have never faced the torture and traumatic conditions that youth of my age and adults

have had to face during communal tensions. These tensions have created a division in the hearts and minds of Hindus and Muslims, like an invisible wall separating us from one another. The Gujarat riots that took place in 2002 transmitted waves of hatred and hostility all over India, corrupting the innocent minds of even the youth. Even though not everyone suffered the harsh conditions of the curfew, one could feel the pain and suffering, seeing so many people fleeing and abandoning their houses in order to save themselves.

It is definitely tough to live in a world full of prejudices and stereotypes. Once during an India-Pakistan cricket match, I was taken aback when my classmate sarcastically commented that I would be supporting

Pakistan! It seemed so insulting to hear such a comment from a friend of mine, and of her being so stereotyped and narrow-minded to think that just because I am a Muslim, it was 'obvious' that I would support Pakistan. Another incident that flashes through my mind is hearing stories of Muslim children being discriminated while seeking admission to schools. What fault is it of innocent children seeking education, a universal requirement which everyone must fulfill, on the basis of sex, religion, caste, creed or status? Such incidents focus and make one realize the narrow-mindedness still existing in the midst of science and technology, of having a negative feeling against religions that are not one's own.

What Are You?

Identity around the World

Arab, Israeli and Muslim: Dealing with Racism Yara Owayyed (Jerusalem)

Once passing through the halls of my school last year, I was stared at and felt very uncomfortable. As I approached some of my friends the whispering and gossiping stopped. I didn't understand what was wrong; it felt as though I had suddenly grown another head.



When I entered my classroom, I understood what it was all about. There were graffiti curses about Arabs and me on the walls. "Death to Arabs," "A good Arab is a dead Arab," "There's a terrorist in this class, be careful!" and many other curses. Rumors spread quickly throughout the school and many pupils showed up to see what my reaction would be. I felt as though I was being stabbed in my heart. Tears sprung to my eyes while many Israelis stood and hooted. Some began cursing me to my face and others just stood and encouraged them. I wished that I just could disappear into thin air at that moment.

I felt so hopeless and hurt. I looked into the faces of the crowd, hoping to see a friendly face that would stand by me, but all I saw was hatred. I suddenly felt afraid. I was afraid of standing there alone. At that moment out of nowhere I saw a table being shoved in my direction. It hit my arm and bruised it. The tears that were threatening to fall fell. I stood there and cried. I was totally humiliated by their

behavior and by the fact that I had started to cry. The tough Yara had suddenly disappeared and I was left vulnerable. I was ashamed of being an Arab, all the pride that I had disappeared. It was as though it was wrong being who I am, it was wrong to be different from the majority of the society.

That day I played hookey from school and started walking to my home. The walk from Ramat Eshkol to Pisgat Ze'ev took me about an hour and a half, an hour and a half that I used to clear up my head, to think of what had happened back there and why I was the one to feel very bad. I didn't do anything wrong, and yet I felt so horrible. I felt bad that kids my age were so closed minded and full of hate, that kids my age weren't willing to accept someone different from them. I asked myself why this was happening, why I needed to leave school because of the cruelty of others. Hatred took over me. I hated those kids, I hated Israelis.

After getting back home, I opened my SOP picture album, turned on the stereo and listened to "Winds of Change." Whenever I feel angry, confused or hurt, memories of camp wash away my pain. I feel as though SOP connects me to reality, reminds me that hatred will get us nowhere. Only love and understanding is the solution to a better life. Seeds of Peace is the only place where

I didn't want an apology just for the sake of being apologized to. I wanted those boys to understand how deeply they had hurt me, emotionally and physically. I wanted them to UNDERSTAND, to understand my side and to understand that not all Arabs are terrorists, and that I'm not going to hurt them. I'm there for them to understand that it is possible to live side by side with Arabs and to be friends with them

I feel secure to be me, the real me, a proud Arab Israeli Muslim. A place where I'm accepted because of who I am and evaluated based on my personality and not on my religion, nationality or beliefs.

The next day I went to school and wasn't afraid to face those kids again. I didn't feel ashamed or vulnerable. I was proud of who I am. I felt pity for those kids that had acted the way they had. It showed that they weren't mature or level-headed people. After entering class I was called to the principal's office. When I got there, three of the boys that had led the attack on me the day before were sitting there. The principal asked the boys to apologize for their violent behavior. The boys wouldn't apologize, and I didn't want an apology just for the sake of being apologized to. I wanted those boys to understand how deeply they had hurt me, emotionally and physically. I wanted them to UNDERSTAND, to understand my side and to understand that not all Arabs are terrorists, and that I'm not going to hurt them. I'm there for them to understand that it is possible to live side by side with Arabs and to be friends with them. I asked the principal to talk to them alone and she agreed.

An awkward silence filled the air, I didn't know exactly what to say and they didn't exactly want to talk to me. It was very hard starting, but I talked, I talked and explained.

The ice was broken; we went into a deep conversation about politics, terrorism, rights and life in general.

Although this was one of the very worst experiences in my life, it led to unexpected results. I succeeded in conveying my message to these boys. I know that they might have not changed much but one thing I know for sure, I had impacted their lives in a small way.

Out of this incident, people became curious about me and who I am. Many approached me with questions about politics, religion and ideology. They were curious to see how an Arab thinks and what he believes. Many came to know me and appreciate me for who I am. I formed numerous relationships with many students at school that I believe will last for a long time since they are built on honesty and caring.

The Difference Between Yasser Arafat and Abu Mazen

Amani Jaber (Taybeh)

Arafat was a heroic symbol for each and every Palestinian. However, in his lifetime the peace process didn't progress as it is now. It is interesting that things seem much easier for Abu Mazen in achieving compromises, agreements and other political improvement in the region. But, why didn't Arafat find it as easy?

My answer to this question would be that whatever happens in this region, whether it is war, peace, or an agreement, it all depends on whatever Israel and the United States favors.

I believe that Arafat was a much better political leader than Abu Mazen, because Arafat was someone who lived the struggle in his own skin, roving in different countries and fighting with his rifle. However, Abu Mazen is too small to fill Arafat's shoes. I am not trying to say that Abu Mazen didn't achieve anything in the region, or that he didn't bring a new era. What I am saying is that Abu Mazen was able to accomplish all of this just because Israel and United States favor him as a leader, and are ready to work with him. We all

know how toward the end of the smoldering Intifada we started to hear in the media how Israel and the U.S had already put an X on Arafat as a leader. They were the ones who created every possible obstacle in his way to run his people and bring stability to the territories. In contrast, Abu Mazen came with a silver spoon in his mouth: the praise of Israel and the U.S.

The reason I am writing in this bitterness is not that I don't like the fact that the region is becoming calmer. My rage comes



from the fact that Arafat could have achieved whatever Abu Mazen did and even more if he was given the chance. So no one can claim that Arafat was a failure in any way. Actually, I bet you if Abu

Mazen would've been in Arafat's place during the Intifada, he wouldn't have survived, because Arafat endured what no one can endure.

Looking at Arafat and Abu Mazen as two leaders for a nation seeking freedom and independence reminds me in a way of Egyptian leaders Gamal Abdul Nasser and Anwar Sadat. Israel and the U.S didn't favor Nasser; therefore, they didn't see him as a partner for negotiations, and his death was a happy end and "freedom" to Egypt in the eyes of the West. The U.S saw in Sadat someone who could bring a new era to the Arab-Israeli conflict and therefore embraced him after signing the peace treaty with Israel. But one shouldn't forget that a leader without his people's love isn't really a leader. Nasser was beloved by his people, unlike Sadat, who was assassinated by a fellow Egyptian. Arafat was beloved by his people, unlike Abu Mazen; he is not popular in the same way Sadat was not.

May peace prevail, and may every leader get the chance to prove himself in his lifetime if he gets the chance to.

ELECTIONS

Choosing a New Leader

Ibrahim Dakkak (Jerusalem)

Elections in Palestine took place, all the while people are suffering from the daily humiliation acts of the Israeli occupation, but the Palestinians proved that they were the strongest in this mission. They stood hand in hand while their heads up, to elect their democratic president.

Most Palestinians knew who would be president. Some people supported Abu Mazen and others supported Dr. Mustafa Bargouthi. I was hoping for Mustafa Bargouthi to take the presidency, since my grandfather works with Dr. Mustafa Bargouthi on the Palestinian national initiative "Al Mobadarah." Our family varied in their choices of candidates. My father supported Bargouthi and my mother supported Bassam Al Salhi.

The preparation for the elections took place in most of the West Bank cities and Gaza, but in Jerusalem it was different; people who live in Jerusalem were threatened against voter registration, and those who were caught sticking posters for the

candidates were put in jail. The Israeli government closed many of the registering offices in Jerusalem and that led to a very low percentage of people who registered in Jerusalem.

On the day of the elections, streets were full of people. In Jerusalem the city looked as if it was freed from Israeli occupation. Checkpoints were removed and Israeli soldiers at the checkpoints were more friendly and humane. We are used to waiting for hours at checkpoints, but during the election it was smooth and easy. People were voting for their candidate without fear, standing side-by-side with democracy.

In my opinion, it is essential to have presidential elections. It makes you feel like you are taking part in building a country, by practicing a basic and legitimate right.

The late President Yasser Arafat – May God Bless His Soul – taught us many things in life. He was a supporter of Seeds of Peace, and he used to praise us when we used to visit him. He accomplished many good things for the Palestinian case. He

fought for more than forty years for the Palestinian case, spending his time on negotiations and meetings and traveling and even fighting in the mountains against the occupation. The Palestinians are very proud of what he did, and the image of that leader won't ever be erased from any Palestinian mind and soul. In his image, future Palestinian presidents will work on accomplishing the Palestinian dream: a free independent state where peace can take place between the nations. I am sure that the day that peace comes and Palestinian state is established, peace will arrive in



Sorting through Palestinian election votes
(Credit: www.bbc.co.uk)

other parts of the world too.

Two Views of the Disengagement

Sagi Ganot (Holon)

Residents of Gush Qatif, the Israeli settlement bloc in the south of the Gaza Strip, are absolutely certain that Ariel Sharon's plan to withdraw from the Strip, and their relocation to Israel proper, is wrong in all aspects. They say that the plan infringes upon Jews' inalienable rights in the Holy Land, that it constitutes a violation of their human rights and of international law, and that it would create a significant security threat to major Israeli cities and serve as a morale boost for Palestinian militants in their attacks against Israelis.

These settlers and their sympathizers, though a minority according to opinion polls, are leading an inspired public struggle to fight the plan. Their resolve stems from their complete conviction in the righteousness of their cause. I wish I could say I had such a commitment to the principles I believe in. Though I disagree

with them, I cannot help but admire the faith they have.

But the line between faith and blind following is thin. I cannot say I fully believe that the plan would mean a better future for Israelis and Palestinians. I cannot predict that my country will regret the move in one year, or five, or ten. But this ability to doubt doesn't weaken my support of the withdrawal process; for me, it is a sign that though I have become convinced of its necessity, I still maintain the ability to criticize my own views and the views of my government, and to sympathize with the tragedy the settlers are about to experience. And though I cannot speak for the majority of Israelis - those who support Sharon's move - I think many of them, faced with the same dilemma, prefer the uncertainty mingled with critical thinking to the stern, perhaps blind faith that characterizes opposition to the move.

For me, the plan signifies not only increased security and economic improvements, but

also an ease to the life of Palestinian Gazans and increased international understanding to the moves Israel must take in the future. It's not a "necessary evil," but a brave course of action that will prove vital in the long run, for Israelis and Palestinians alike.



Disengagement opponents demonstrate near the Knesset
(Credit: www.katif.net)

DISENGAGEMENT

In January of 2005, Palestinians elected their first new leader in over a generation; this coming July, Israel will withdraw settlers living in the Gaza Strip. Seeds offer their opinions on these two momentous changes that will have a lasting impact on relationships between the two countries and on the Middle East as a whole

Painful Decisions are Necessary on Both Sides

Nicola Kabar (Bethlehem)

Painful decisions are the major factors that lead to peace. The Israeli Prime Minister made a painful decision to withdraw from Gaza, and to evacuate all the settlements inside it. This step was not expected from Israel, and was happy news for Palestinians, but for most Israelis it was painful and shocking.

I think that several painful decisions should be made by both sides in order to have peace, because the main rule to have peace



is to sacrifice, and to sacrifice you have to give something that is really close to you or important. As a Seed, I think that this step was not only good for the Palestinian side, but also for the Israeli, because it will eventually reduce the violence in Gaza Strip, and build a new base for starting the Palestinian state. Having control over Gaza, the Palestinian Authority should start strengthening its forces and police, to be able to control all the Palestinian cities after the Israelis withdraw from them. I hope that this step will be the spark of the peace, so that Israel and Palestine can live peacefully together.

Delegation Leader Program Expands

Since 1993, Delegation Leaders (DLs) have served as the link between home communities and SOP. Founded and run by SOP Vice President Barbara Zasloff, over 300 educators and adult community members participate in this leadership network. The DLs come from schools, ministries of education and other leadership positions. In their home communities, the DLs participate in camper selection, orientation and community relations, and at camp participate in daily dialogue sessions and educational programs. After camp, DLs attend international conferences on subjects such as helping students understand the media and teaching tolerance in the classroom. In 2004, SOP initiated year-round programming for DLs in the Middle East. DLs describe their experiences at camp and in their home communities

Soufiane Khammasi Tunisian DL 2004

In a paradise-like landscape in the state of Maine, and in the heart of a green forest and a beautiful lake, I attended what it seems to me now to be the most exciting experience of my life: a Seeds of Peace session with marvelous people who deeply

believe in peace, understanding and tolerance - experiencing a shared life despite our racial, ethnic, and religious differences.

Day after day since then, I become aware of the deep positive effects that the experience has made within me. Although we haven't met since then, I am sure that we are all doing our best to implement, as

humans and as educators, the true principles of Seeds of Peace in our countries. One day I saw President Aaron Miller on television in Tunisia. I felt truly linked and involved in what he was saying about peace. Long live Seeds of Peace. I hope that I continue to live this peace.

Nandini Purandare Indian DL 2004

Hanaa was from Egypt. We met briefly on the bus that took us from Boston to Maine. It was getting to be evening. We had had long flights and were very tired. In fact, Hanaa was the lone leader of a bunch of beautiful, energetic, noisy, naughty set of teenagers, chattering nonstop on that bus. Our Indian contingent had two leaders, myself and another with a quieter set of 14 kids, filled with trepidation about the weeks ahead. We were all on our way to the Seeds of Peace International Camp in Maine. Our reception when we reached camp was unbelievable. All DLs, counselors, camp personnel and the delegations that were already at camp were there to greet us when we got off that bus. It was unforgettable. Somebody took my bags and me to a cottage at the far side of the camp. It faced a

beautiful lake, the sun was setting and there were giant firs in a grassy meadow. What struck me first was the quiet and peace of this place. I was alone now, in a little room with a dresser, two beds, alongside which was a cubicle with a shower and toilet. I went into that tiny space and positioned myself in a way that my elbows wouldn't bang and graze against the walls. This would be my home for three weeks. My home? You must be kidding. Our home - an unknown stranger from some other country and me. For the moment, however, I was alone. I had some time to unpack before dinner. I could hear pottering in the room next to me. It would be Hanaa I thought. Nobody else had arrived. In a while after dinner, I was back, wondering when the others would arrive. Tentatively, I asked Hanaa if she would room with me since the others were expected late at night. That way, we could lock ourselves up and get a

good night's sleep. She agreed and thus began a friendship that grew to be intense and truly full of joy.

And so the days sped past. Hanaa and I often talked, she enlightened me about the conflict in the Middle East. I told her about South Asia and the Afghanistan, Pakistan, Kashmir and India interface. I learned, I was enlightened and I carried the message of peace into my life, into the lives of those around me, into my work, into my writing. For those days I lived the agony of those who leave home every morning, not knowing whether they will come home at night, of those who only want to live safely on their land. And Hanaa and I grew closer. When all begins to fade, the stories and the jokes, the forests and the lake, the ocean and the sun in Maine, Hanaa smiles at me with her eyes and I am home again.

Khamis Ghosheh Manager, Palestinian DL Program

In the summer of 2004, I had the privilege of knowing SOP from the inside, when I was nominated to be a delegation leader for the Palestinian campers. This included helping to orient and prepare the new Seeds for a big step in their lives: to be Palestinian Ambassadors, to know the concepts of peace, patience, respect, tolerance and acceptance of others. For myself, as a DL I had a unique mixture of responsibilities for the Seeds, as well as my own experiences: fruitful non-violent dialogues with other Delegation Leaders, including the Israeli DLs. Our dialogue sessions, which ran three hours a day, were based on mutual respect, understanding and active listening. When the summer was over I was honored to be chosen to manage the Year-Round Palestinian Delegation Leader group in East Jerusalem and the West Bank. I work in partnership with my colleague Dr.

Mohammad Isleem, who is managing the Palestinian program in Gaza.

The work is a real challenge; we have not even managed to get together with our colleagues from Gaza! But that will not stop us; on the contrary it will give us more strength to do what is best for SOP, for our

group, our country and the future of our children: always to carry on and persevere in our goal of educating the Seeds and our community.

We are working on consolidating ties amongst Palestinian DLs to create a harmonious team including our Gazan colleagues; we have also worked with Israeli DLs during two gatherings: one in Jordan, where we visited religious and historical sites, and one to Eilat, to visit some important places and enjoy the nature. Currently we are working on hosting a multinational seminar on the role of culture in identity formation, which we are working on with the Israeli DLs.

We Delegation Leaders realize we are not going to change the face of the earth, but we will definitely do our best to fulfill our share in shaping our society and making it worth living in. Working in this way, for the benefit of our children and generations yet to come, is what SOP is all about.



Israeli, Palestinian and Jordanian DLs met at a conference in Amman in February (Credit: Haya Shapira)

Azza ElSherbiny Manager, Egyptian DL Program

The role of a DL before, during, and after camp is very challenging. We are introduced to a group of teens from different backgrounds, and asked to be as helpful as possible to them. We get to meet with the students more than once before going to camp. We take very seriously the responsibility of the campers' safety and emotional comfort, being a long way from home, for a long time.

Before going to camp, we DLs have the difficult task of assuming the role of a family leader for our delegations. Most of



Azza and DL Coordinator Barbara Zasloff at the Amman conference (Credit: Azza ElSherbiny)

Sister Pilar Vila-San-Juan Pakistani DL 2001

When Seeds of Peace opened the possibility to add to her campers, Pakistanis and Indians, I had the privilege of being a Delegation Leaders for the Pakistan delegation in 2001.

We always read *The Olive Branch* here which was full of the experiences of the campers, but I always wondered about the Delegation Leaders. Now I know. We educators have quite an experience, which, for me at least, has remained in my heart

the time there is a male and a female delegation leader who act like mother and father. Before going to camp we try to help students learn more about the conflict they are going to be discussing. We also try to help campers of the same delegation get closer to each other before going to camp, and to make them feel they are all members of one family.

By the time we arrive at camp, we feel emotionally attached to each other. We look forward to delegation meetings, when kids talk out their problems and concerns. Sometimes they ask us to do some shopping for them, or maybe get them some snacks for the next meeting, just like parents. In camp, we Delegation Leaders have our own coexistence program—a mix of culture, education and conflict resolution. We enjoy it as much as campers do. We too make friends that we keep in touch with, from different parts of the world.

The sad part is on the way back home, when we are faced with the fact that those kids will no longer be ours. But you know,

and become part of my way of living ever since. As a teacher of youth, I found it one of the best lessons I have ever received. More than ever, since being at SOP, I try to teach my pupils to be peacemakers in the world.

The young people always remember the first night in their cabins with their supposed enemies. For us Delegation Leaders, sharing with each other was similar but from the point of view of adults, not teenagers. We traveled for long distances; we shared our cultures and faith. Our students cried when we left the camp and we adults too suffered the pain of separation. We all thought as

whenever I meet with them after camp, I get back this motherly feeling. I do miss my kids very much. I get very touched when they call me every now and then, or invite me to their gatherings. I feel exceptionally happy seeing them growing and taking on their own responsibilities.

Recently, Seeds of Peace has introduced the Year-Round Regional Delegation Leaders Program led by Barbara Zasloff. The goal of this program is to increase our ability to teach the importance of dialogue, tolerance, and non-violent conflict resolution within our personal and community life. Each national group creates unique ways appropriate to its own situation, that contributes to the creation of peaceful communities.

So, in every way we are not merely "escorts" to a group of kids going to summer camp. We are part of a life changing experience: being part of Seeds of Peace.

Delegation Leaders that we might never see one another again, but everyone had the feeling that we would be friends forever. It was good to know that we all would be doing our best, wherever we went to teach others how to live peacefully. I thank SOP for what it did in my life and in the life of the young people I accompanied. I will pray all my life for John Wallach, who is in the Heavens and close to God. We know he is looking at us and at all those who continue his dream for Peace in regions of conflict, and we know that through the youth we can hope for a better world.

Haya Shapira Manager, Israeli DL Program

Following the end of the 2004 camp, the delegation leaders have initiated a year round program to make a mark and build bridges of understanding between communities after the educators leave camp.

Among other places, this program is operating in Israel, Jordan, Egypt and the Palestinian Authority. All the groups are a part of Seeds of Peace and act in the spirit of its values, as part of the Delegation Leader Program.

Our Israeli group has set priorities which include enlarging the circle of participants, presenting Seeds activities to the greater public, influencing national educational policies, Seeds of Peace efforts and creating successful partnerships with like-minded communities, which identify with the principles of peace and coexistence. As with follow-up youth activities, we want to create connections with Arabs including the Palestinian delegation.

Since November, we Israelis have met many times. In addition to many short meetings we have enjoyed a weekend in Haifa, in December 2004, where we participated in the Holiday of Holidays celebration, an annual festival celebrating Hanukkah, Ramadan and Christmas. In March, we had a positive weekend in Amman, where we were hosted by the Jordanian Delegation Leaders. We took a joint trip to the sites of Jerash, Madaba and Mount Nebo. This experience was shared with the Palestinian Delegation Leaders as well. In April we are planning to host the Palestinian and Jordanian delegations in Eilat, and in May, a multinational seminar on the role of culture on identity formation is being hosted by the Palestinian delegation.

We are also engaged in a long-term effort. This year we started a project between Delegation Leaders from Eilat and Jordan who are

working on creating a joint school curriculum on the environment. The Rabin School in Eilat and the Rosary School in Aqaba are organizing this initiative together. In the future, we hope to make connections with the DL program in Egypt in order to continue and strengthen the ties between Israeli and Egyptian adults and youth.



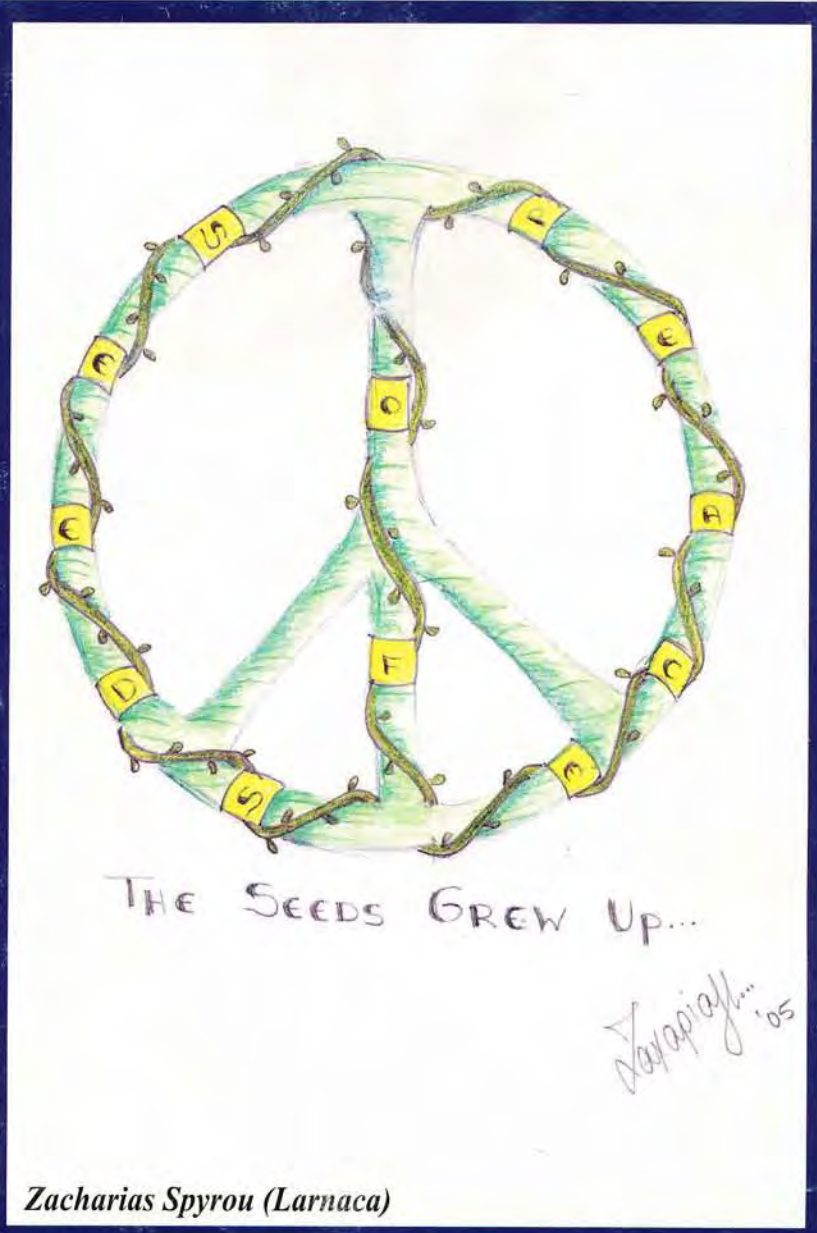
Israeli and Palestinian DLs tour the Baha'i Temple in Haifa (Credit: Haya Shapira)



fine.

Shahar Fineberg (Jerusalem)

Every now and then comes a time wher



Zacharias Spyrou (Larnaca)

and glasses filled with sun. Where you turn a Jerusalem boulevard of pines, truncated by

e you feel fine. And the world blossoms and all is fine. You dream sweet dreams of luscious women and Italian fields. Your face to the su

