

THE OLIVE BRANCH

Youth Magazine of the Seeds of Peace Program | Volume VII, Issue II | Winter 2003



Hope in Our Hands

**WILD WINTER WORKSHOP:
120 ISRAELI AND PALESTINIAN
SEEDS STORM THE DESERT ♦
COEXISTENCE ON CAMPUS:
SEEDS SCHOLARS IN U.S.
UNIVERSITIES ♦ BREAKING
THE LANGUAGE BARRIER:
CROSS-CULTURAL
COMMUNICATION ♦ WARY OF
WAR: GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES
ON THE IRAQ CRISIS ♦
UNBROKEN SPIRITS:
ALTERNATIVES TO REVENGE
♦ SARAJEVO SEMINAR:
BALKAN SEEDS BUILD THE
FUTURE ♦ WALKIN' THE
WALK: COMMUNITY ACTIVISM
IN THE SHADOW OF CONFLICT**

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THE OLIVE BRANCH

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

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All submissions are property of Seeds of Peace, and may be edited for length, content or style.

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

COVER PHOTO: Israeli and Palestinian, Blue and Green, 120 Seeds together make the desert bloom with color at the 2002 Winter Workshop at Kibbutz Yahel. The Seeds are holding pomelo fruits from the nearby kibbutz orchards. (photo: Walid Abed Elhadi)

Letters

Dear Seeds of Peace,

Two months ago my family and I were faced with the biggest tragedy of all - my father suddenly passed away, without any warning of any kind.

In this incredibly difficult time, I received endless support from friends everywhere - people who stood there beside me in my toughest moments, who visited, who called to see how I was doing, and even just dropped me a line to show their support and empathy. You have no idea how much that all meant to me.

My father was an amazing human being. He was always impressed by Seeds of Peace and was proud of me for taking part in the organization. I know he would be impressed by you all today, too. I miss him terribly.

In a true time of need, the Seeds of Peace family showed just how caring it can be. Thank you so much for your amazing love and support.

Love, Liav and the Harel family (Haifa)

Looking for a Future in Gaza

Many people in the West Bank and Gaza Strip still hope that peace will prevail in the Middle East. In peace, all countries can raise the standard of living of their peoples.

Peace can help us make progress in fields such as industry, agriculture, education, tourism, economy, health, commerce, communication, and social development.

Peace gives us a golden chance to do useful projects, instead of spending money on wars and destructive weapons.

We hope that direct contact will serve as an example to others in the region, and create a lasting peace for generations to come so that forces of peace will overcome the shadows of darkness.

Now is the time to move from peace making to peace building and give the future generations a chance to live in peace.

Ameer Abu Salim (Deir Al-Balah, Gaza)

Seeing Seeds on Campus

I am a student at Rutgers University in New Jersey. Tonight I attended a presentation by Seeds of Peace graduates studying in the USA: Bashar Iraqi, Laith Houry and Mohamad Matar. They were invited by the Hillel Jewish Students organization and the Islamic Students Society together. No words



Seeds of Peace President Aaron Miller and wife Lindsay Miller, late Founder and President John Wallach, Seeds, and supporter in 1993, the original summer of Seeds of Peace.

can express the impact this program had on me. I was extremely inspired and moved. I felt that I had to contact your organization immediately because I am planning to come to Jerusalem this summer. I would love the opportunity to take part in this incredibly courageous, unique, and most important mission of peace. Thank you,

Limor Gabbay

A Game with Human Lives

I forget the situation I am in, and what the world is facing. I forget the situation in my country... for a while, I mean seconds. Then what? I can't forget; the situation is a part of me, of my blood, of my body. How can a person forget? The world is changing for the worse and what are we doing about it? Nothing, absolutely nothing. It's selfishness! Every single one of us just wants to live life because we know we are next in line: why should we suffer for others if we know our turn is on the way? Nearly everyone lives this way and we all know it.

I am talking about everyone in the world; I am not talking about my conflict, which is being ignored these days. If we are forced to live in this world, the next generation is also forced. A few people are fooling the whole world and no one is paying any attention.

Politics, politics. I love it. And I hate it.

You lose, you win, it's like a game, but you're talking about a real game with human lives. That's what makes it interesting for some people in big, huge places. These people get busy, so busy they have no time to waste on people. We all know how important people get busy, right?

I am being sarcastic. This is not about my friends. It's about big people in big political places. It's about nearly every political leader, minister, or anyone in any government in the world, and it's about every conflict in the world.

Reem Yusuf (Ramallah)

To the Afghan Seeds

When I got the last issue of the Olive Branch I was overwhelmed by the Afghan Seeds' articles. I had tears streaming from my eyes when I read the emotions you turned into words. You have been through it all, your situation couldn't have gotten any worse, and still here you are, standing strong with the hope and determination for bettering your future. You are courageous to face the world. I really look up to each one of you... young people who will be our leaders in the future.

Janeen Madan (Mumbai)

Doing the J-O-B in Yemen

Being a Seed in Yemen is fairly different than being a Seed in any other country. People around me have strong opposition to the other side. I have been questioned a lot by my friends and other people. I expected that. I had a lot to tell everyone about my experience.

When my brother came back from camp, we were surprised to read a newspaper article about him and his fellow Yemeni Seeds. The article said they had been 'brainwashed' at camp. It's frustrating and sad to see that people unintentionally follow the route of falsehood in their thoughts, without trying to find the truth.

I did a presentation in my school once and it went so great. I talked about the tolerance and love in the Seeds of Peace community, about my experience there and about the foundation and idea of Seeds of Peace. All those listening to me seemed interested and satisfied. Some wanted to participate in camp and asked me how to apply for it, others wanted to learn more about it. It's quite hard to get space to do a presentation at school, but I'm trying to do another one.

Since people in one's community are often full of prejudices, it makes our J-O-B difficult. We must be confident, determined, interested, and strong in order to have an effect on others.

Amr Al Zain (Sana'a, Yemen)

Why the World Needs Seeds of Peace/ From Seeds of Peace President Aaron David Miller

On January 15, 2003 Aaron David Miller became President of Seeds of Peace.

For the better part of the last twenty-five years, I have lived my life in the world of the possible. As an advisor to six Secretaries of State on Arab-Israeli negotiations, I have witnessed and participated in dramatic changes in the political landscape of the Arab-Israeli conflict that I never thought possible. During these years I developed a strong belief in two propositions: that the Arab-Israeli conflict could be resolved in a way that is durable and equitable for both sides; and that this result could be achieved only through negotiations.

The past two-and-a-half years of terror and violence have strained but not broken my faith in these propositions. To give up on them means giving up on the future, and we simply cannot afford that. Indeed, I remain convinced that negotiations — however imperfect and time consuming they may be — are the only way out of the current crisis and the only pathway to a lasting solution.

But I also have come to understand and to appreciate more clearly that official diplomacy — the world of formal negotiations — must be married to something else: a determined commitment by all sides to change the attitudes and perceptions of those caught up in conflict, particularly the younger generation. No matter how compelling the terms of any agreement, peace will not be secured without an effort to break down barriers of suspicion and mistrust and create positive relations between people. Indeed, if peacemaking remains the purview of the diplomats alone, it will not succeed.

Amidst the ruin and wreckage of the past two years, one organization — embodying this philosophy — has shone through brightly. Seeds of Peace has not only survived the collapse of the formal peace process, it has grown as if energized by adversity. John Wallach's dream and vision have become reality, a permanent feature in the landscape of conflict resolution and coexistence in the Arab-Israeli arena. And the organization has even broadened its reach to other areas of conflict - Cyprus, the Balkans, and South Asia.

Three integrated elements comprise Seeds of Peace's philosophy, each reinforcing the other:

First, leadership. In historic conflicts, change is often generational. We focus on reaching out to the next generation's leaders before protracted conflict and age close hearts and minds.

Second, coexistence. Seeds of Peace provides the environment and skills necessary to make the painful transition from the psychology of conflict to the possibility of coexistence.

Third, hope. John Wallach's greatest gift was that through Seeds of Peace we could see a more hopeful vision of what the future could be.

Few get a chance to see that future, or to be part of an historic enterprise that works to make it a reality. You — Seeds everywhere — have that chance. As tensions mount and dark clouds of war and confrontation gather, do not lose hope in that vision. Rely on yourselves, hold on to one another and to what you have learned as Seeds, and you will triumph. How can you not? After all, you are Seeds of Peace; you are the future.

Remarks by Hon. William Jefferson Clinton, 42nd US President

Seeds of Peace "Bid for Peace" Celebrity Auction, New York City, January 14, 2003

I first heard of Seeds of Peace while flying on Air Force One. Hillary called me and said that she had just met all these wonderful kids from this organization called Seeds of Peace and that I had to make sure they witnessed the Middle East peace signing on September the 19th, 1993. So I said, "Yes, of course."

Seeds also came to Washington in 1994 and again in 2000 when a meeting that was scheduled for five minutes in the Oval Office ran on for an hour. I pointed out to my staff that we didn't have much time left in the White House and I'd rather spend it with these young people because they'd be influencing peace when I was gone...

John Wallach began Seeds of Peace out of a conviction that treaties and negotiations mean nothing if the people who are supposed to be governed by them don't believe in them. A camp in Maine that started with 46 campers has turned out more than 2,000 graduates from 22 countries...

I would like to say a special word of appreciation to Aaron Miller, your incoming

President. He played a pivotal role in the Middle East peace negotiations during the entire eight years I served as President. He did a fine job and I was very grateful that he stayed on with the incoming administration. I think that his best years of advancing the cause of peace are ahead of him because peace will ultimately be made in the minds and hearts of the young people of the Middle East.

It is a hard thing these young people have decided to do. Camp is fun in the beginning but it's not easy when you go back home and you see people you love and care about whose loyalties remain unchanged, who hold on to age-old animosities and the raw fresh wounds of this last awful Intifada. They go home often to an environment and ask their friends and families to look at people they consider to be enemies instead as human beings...

After seven years of progress toward peace, these last years have once again widened the divide between us and them in the Middle East. Yet the fundamental realities have not changed. The Israelis and Palestinians can employ one another, do business with one another, and their children can play together. Or, they can kill, wound and impoverish each other. The one thing they cannot do is escape each other. We must preserve our diverse faiths and cultures within the contexts of shared benefits, responsibilities and values rooted in our common humanity. Sooner or later you have to give up hatred and revenge and look for tomorrow. Because of Seeds of Peace, whenever it happens, it will be sooner than it would have been...

I am grateful for Seeds of Peace. I am grateful for John's life. I am grateful for Janet's commitment. I am grateful for Aaron's new mission and I hope all of you will support them for the rest of your lives, as long as it takes for the rest of the people in your homeland to realize that you were right all along.

Excerpts of former President Clinton's remarks



From left: Seeds of Peace President Aaron Miller, Seeds Hilla Meller '01 (Haifa) and Adham Rishmawi '97 (Beit Sahour) and 42nd US President Bill Clinton.

SEEDS TAKING THE LEAD



Nageeb Makhoulf '99



Bushra Jawabri '95



Mera Almukarker '98



Sadeq Damra '99



Koby Sadan '94



Wafa Takroori '99 and Shani Manor '99 (photo: Suzanne Morrell)

Hiba Darwish '97 (Beit Jala), Julia Resnitsky '00 (Bet Shemesh) and Nageeb Makhoulf '99 (Beit Jala) starred in an hour-long documentary, "True Life: I Live in the Terror Zone," broadcast across America by MTV on February 26.

Ya'akov "Koby" Sadan '94 (Tel Aviv) and Bushra Jawabri '95 (Al-Aroub) spoke in Tokyo to the opening plenary session of the World Youth Volunteer Symposium, sponsored by the International Association for Volunteer Effort and the Cabinet Office of Japan. They also led a workshop on Peace and Reconciliation for Japanese university students.

Shani Manor '99 (Oranit) and Wafaa Takroori '99 (Hebron) spoke to Nobel Peace Prize Laureates at the second annual Women's Peace Breakfast Honoring Women Peacemakers, sponsored by Congresswoman Bernice Eddy Johnson in Washington, DC.

Mera Almukarker '98 (Beit Jala) was elected Assistant Chair of the first-ever Women's Section of the Fatah party on the Student Council at Bethlehem University.

Sadeq Damra '99 (Amman) was the MVP of the swim team at Manhattanville College in Purchase, New York.

Erbilin Mehmetaj '01 (Pristina) attended Legacy International-Global Youth Village through an Open Society Institute scholarship. He participated in a 4-week training program in the Washington, DC, area that included cultural enrichment and appointments at various agencies and NGOs.

Cemal Kavasogullari '99 (Lefkosa) earned the highest score on the OSS Entrance Examination for Turkish universities of all Turkish Cypriot students. Cemal is now studying at the Medical School of Hacettepe University in Turkey.



Hiba Darwish '97



Julia Resnitsky '00



Eli Shteinberg '99

Eli Shteinberg '99 and Ron Roman '99 (Haifa) won first prize at the International Student Film Festival in California, USA, for the film "Hayom V'Nora" ("The Day He Was Shot") that they produced together with Germain Choukroun. **Their film is a documentary about the killing**



Ron Roman '99

of Seed of Peace Asel Asleh in October 2000.

Asel's death remains unaddressed by a commission of inquiry created to investigate the killing of Asel and 12 other Arab citizens of Israel in demonstrations and clashes with police in October 2000. The film can be viewed at www.studentfilmfestival.org/winner.htm



Sara Al-Jabari '97 (Hebron) is possibly the first graduate of Seeds of Peace to be a mother. Her daughter Youmna was born on Christmas Day, December 25, 2002, in Jerusalem. Sara shared feelings about being a mother and hopes for her daughter's future with THE OLIVE BRANCH:

"The most perfect gift from God is my lovely daughter. I felt that all the pleasure in the world is mine on the day she was born... It is a very beautiful thing to be a mother, the most beautiful thing in the world.

"I will teach my daughter how to be a peaceful person, and how to deal with everyone. I will tell her about my beautiful experience in Seeds of Peace and I hope she will be a Seed one day.

"I hope that Youmna will have a better life from what we have had, that she will live her life in a peaceful way without problems, and feel as a free person. I hope that Youmna will continue her education and be an important person in the future. I think that she can marry and continue her education, or do the contrary. I hope she will have a life without checkpoints.

"After having Youmna a lot of responsibilities landed on my shoulders, but I am very happy to have these responsibilities. I feel that my life has a new meaning, and that I gave life to a small human being at a time when so many humans are killed."

Sara is studying for her BA in English Literature at Al-Quds University, and working part-time as an Arabic-English translator for the Palestinian Media Center.



Sara Al-Jabari '97 and daughter Youmna Al-Jabari (2017, insh'allah...) (photo: Walid Abed Elhadi)

Seeds in the Sand

120 Israeli and Palestinian teenagers spent four glorious December days together at the fourth annual and largest-ever Seeds of Peace Winter Workshop at Kibbutz Yahel. Together, they built leadership skills and friendships, and brought the message of coexistence and the traditions of camp to vibrant life in the Middle Eastern desert.



photos: Rona Harari, Walid Abed Elhadi



120 Israeli and Palestinian Seeds rompin' in the dunes of the Negev desert.



The fate of sixty airborne pomelos spelled victory or defeat for Blue or Green.

Reviving the Seeds Spirit

There was something special about the trip to Yahel; I retrieved my Seeds spirit. At Yahel we did many amazing things that every Seed would want to do: coexistence, talent show, sports, and most important, color games. The color games were tiring as usual, but wonderful!

Each night we stayed up late; Arabs and Jews, singing songs, telling jokes, telling stories — beautiful ones, weird ones, and sad ones — and most important, we ate pomelos!!!

Unfortunately it lasted only four days, but in those days I did wonderful things that made me remember that I am a Seed of Peace and have many friends from both sides.

Ahmad Nasser El Din (Jerusalem)

Building Leadership Skills

The Winter Workshop focused on building leadership skills. Israeli and Palestinian Seeds did presentations in the regional school, held coexistence discussions about models of leadership, and chose activities based on skill-building or making a difference: creating an artistic memorial to children killed on both sides, writing messages to people in each community who suffered from the conflict, learning the skills of mediation, building public speaking skills, and a Arabic/Hebrew language workshop (see p.13).

I chose to learn about mediation. It's even harder than being who you are, and representing yourself. Being a mediator requires putting all personal opinions aside.

Najwan Nasralla (Haifa)

The aim of the memorial was to offer sympathy and support to people who once lamented and mourned a loved one whose life was lost due to the injustices of the conflict.

Nada Dajani (Jerusalem)

Camp in a Different Environment

At Kibbutz Yahel, the staff used camp language to give us the feeling that we were back in camp. We lived in "bunks," had "Line Up" announcements, ate in the "dining hall," and all chose a "special activity." We went to gigantic sand dunes in the desert, which was especially fun because we don't usually have the chance to go insane and do acrobatic maneuvers in sand. In the evening we had the "Talent Fire" under the stars, and watched friends show their performance skills.

Coexistence discussions at Yahel were different from camp. At camp we were away from our reality. Here we are living the reality, so we have much more to say to each other.

*Don't worry,
Ma, it washes out...*



*Go back! Go back!
Go back into the...sand!*



It was different to have a seminar with Palestinians, sleeping with my "enemy" in the same room. I think that was the biggest influence on me. I became close to Seeds I never met at camp. The environment at Yahel allowed us to forget about other problems and concentrate on our goal.

Danny Shmurak (Ashdod)

Coaching; Just Do It!

When you see your coaches at camp staying awake until 4 a.m. and losing their voices by the second day of Color Games, the last thing you want to do is be one. Fortunately, the Yahel Pomelo Color Games only lasted half a day (we lost our voices by the third hour).

On a warm desert night, around a bonfire, Sami was telling a story of the everlasting fight between the Camels and the Ford Transits. Right before the end of it, both team's coaches jumped out of two decorated Vans all dressed up in their team's colors.

After some major introductions that included a tractor, and no music, thanks to a broken stereo, we all set off with our teams to prepare for the variety show.



Coaching Color Games can drive you crazy.

After a hilarious evening, everyone went to sleep... except the coaches. We, of course, stayed up until 4 a.m. dividing the team into groups for the Message to Al-Jundi relay race and other sports events, only to find out that after four hours of sketching, scratching and being hungry, the sports events were cancelled. Nevertheless it was a pleasant experience equal to being eaten slowly by a giant snake.

At the end of the Yahel Games, because of the absence of a lake, a very wet surprise was dumped on the winning team in the form of buckets of freezing cold water, with pneumonia to follow. So with a high fever and a hoarse voice we all boarded the buses and went back home to hot baths and aspirin.

I can conclude by saying, if you are ever asked to be a coach, DO IT! It's worth everything; it's challenging, and there's nothing better than to look on your team, joyous after winning, and to know that you have contributed to that achievement in your own little way.

Eli Shteinberg (Haifa)

Sending a Powerful Message

At the Yahel seminar, one of the main themes was leadership. We were given the choice of different activities where we could do something to make a difference. I chose "Sending a Message." The purpose of the activity was to write letters to families and people from the other side who had been hurt by the conflict we live in.

At the beginning, we shared stories about people we know who suffered because of the violence between Israelis and Palestinians. When I heard about all the people who got hurt, about all the sad stories, I didn't know what to think. Many people are hurt every day because of this conflict. Isn't it sad?

From all the stories I heard, one got my attention. It was about a Palestinian woman named Manal. Manal is an artist who lives in Nablus in the West Bank, where there is a lot of fighting. During a military operation in Nablus, Israeli soldiers broke into her apartment and destroyed all of the paintings she had painted in her life. I like to draw in my free time, and I know how dear a work of art is to the person who created it, so her story really reached something in my heart.

I decided to write to her, to let her know that I am an Israeli girl and I do care about the other side. I believe in people and in our right to live in a peaceful world. I tried to give her some of my own hope. Sometimes when something really bad happens to us, we forget to believe. When I wrote the letter, I couldn't stop imagining her face when she gets the letter and reads the words that came from my heart. I hope she can write me a letter back, and tell me if she still believes, if she cares about my words.

I think that this activity was important. We heard real, personal stories about the issues which affect us every day and we stopped to think for one moment about the people who are getting hurt. They can be from this side or from the other side, but they are human victims of this war.

Hila Arie (Afula)

Dear Hila,

It is really not that easy to explain to you my feeling when I read your article. It pushed me to read your message again and again. The first time I read your message, I felt so many things; pride, happiness, and hope. I decided not to answer you... I didn't know what to say. I thought that you would imagine how much your words, coming from your heart, would do for me.

I really appreciate your feeling. I was able to read even what you didn't write. Your message touched me. I would like to tell you that I never lost my hope in peace. Maybe I don't think it will be very soon, but still it is my dream. When I see someone your age having faith in peace, I feel more and more energy to keep fighting for peace, because the young people are what the future will be. Yes, it is our fight and we are going to win. Maybe we are still living inside the dream of Martin Luther King, but one day this dream will be reality.

Peace is not only a word, it is a lot of things. Peace is justice, freedom, equality. Peace is human life. All that I went through, and all that my people are going through, is against peace. After what happened to me, I was so angry; I wanted to do something, I wanted to fight, to protest. I found myself fighting for peace, and your words gave me the energy to say: let's fight together for the peace of justice.

Let's fight against the occupation, against the demolition of human rights, against the apartheid, against the curfew, the checkpoints.... then we will be able to achieve peace.

Thank you for your message.... I was very proud to read your words.

Yes, there is no way other than peace. Just peace.

Manal (Nablus)



Seeds talk with students at the Kibbutz regional school

Walkin' the Walk

Palestinian Seeds Take Action at Jericho Seminar

55 Palestinian Seeds from the West Bank, Gaza and Jordan crossed checkpoints to spend three days together in Jericho. They volunteered at a refugee camp and explored the ways they can make a positive difference in their communities.

The Volunteer Spirit

Lucy Amireh (Beit Jala)

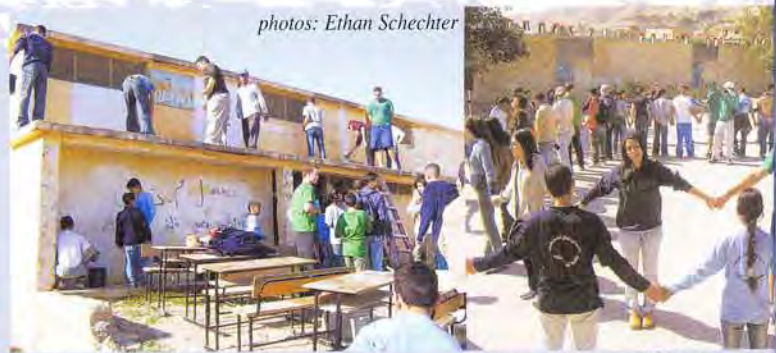
Since the Intifada started more than two years ago, the circumstances in which Palestinians are living have become worse and worse. Many times students can't reach their schools due to closures or curfews. Children are prevented from enjoying any kind of entertainment. Because of this, social organizations are growing more important, and usually these organizations depend on volunteers. The Jericho seminar was all about volunteer work. The activities were aimed at making us think about how we can help our communities not only as Seeds, but also as part of Palestinian society.

In Jericho, we went to a refugee camp school. We joined the kids in entertainment programs; singing, dancing, drawing and painting with them. We did role plays with them which were enjoyable for both the kids and the Seeds. Seeing a smile on the faces of those kids meant a great deal to all of us. Our final project was painting one of the halls of the school to turn it into a hall for sports. I enjoyed painting so much because it was voluntary teamwork.

The activities were aimed at making us think about how we can help our communities not only as Seeds, but also as part of Palestinian society.

After that interesting day at the school, we discussed how we can do useful work for our people when we go back home. For instance, if there's a curfew and you have children in your neighborhood not going to school, you can help them with their studies. If you are talented you can teach children your talent. The ideas we came up with were wonderful and if we apply them, they will definitely be great.

I have participated in volunteer work several times and the more I do, the more I feel satisfied with myself. Still, in the seminar, I felt how great



photos: Ethan Schechter

Seeds transform an abandoned building into a sparkling white gymnasium.

Refugee children and Palestinian Seeds dance the debka, a traditional Arabic folk dance, together.

it would be to do these sorts of things within Seeds of Peace. I believe teamwork is more effective than individual work.

When we went home after the seminar we were full of energy to give all we could because now more than any other time we all need one another. That's why we are working on turning what we said to real actions. I believe we have started to walk the walk after talking the talk.

Finally, it is said that when good seeds are planted in soil they give good plants. What if those seeds were seeds of peace? Then we would grow and water them. So we should all work hard within our communities. We need Israeli Seeds to put a lot of effort into spreading what you believe among your people; we hope the number of people joining the peace camp in Israel will increase rather than decrease. Believe me, this is the help we are expecting from you. It is much more important than any material aid.

Family Reunion

Ameer Abu Salim (Deir il Balah, Gaza Strip)

We needed the Jericho seminar at this time to feel again that we are Seeds of Peace. Getting out of Gaza was a three-hour experience in itself. When we first began to cross from Gaza, there was a good soldier who met us in Erez. He respected us and wasn't afraid when he talked to us. He came near us and spoke to us about many things. But there were other soldiers at the next checkpoint who treated us like animals. Those soldiers didn't want to bother to ask us anything or to speak to us; they ignored us. The first guy

Most of the Seeds that were there I had never met before, but I still felt like I was a part of them, like they were my brothers and sisters.

really made me happy. We can achieve something if there are soldiers like this. I don't know why the other soldiers treated us like that. We are Seeds of Peace, we are not terrorists. I expect them to treat us like humans.

Arriving at the seminar was a great feeling. I met the new Palestinian Seeds and saw my old friends. I felt like I am a part of this great society with these wonderful people. They made me feel like I am a part of them, like brothers and sisters. It had been two and a half years since I had seen any of the Seeds outside of Gaza. Most of the Seeds that were there I had never met before, but I still felt like I was a part of them, like they were my brothers and sisters.

The group discussions were fabulous. There were lots of subjects I really wanted to talk about, such as the situation in Gaza and the West Bank, the Intifada and the people whose houses and lands were destroyed, and how we can help people in our communities. The best thing about the discussions was that we spoke about how to do things, we didn't just talk.



Badawi Qawasmi painting the new school gymnasium at the Eyn Al-Sultan Refugee Camp.



Every effort matters, no matter how small (or tall!)



Seeds lead the children of the Ayn Al-Sultan Refugee Camp in creative activities including drama, art, music and dance.

We have to do something that people can touch and can see.

When we went to the Ayn Al-Sultan refugee camp in Jericho, it was beautiful. We met the elementary school students and did drama and music and art with them. It was my first time doing something like this. The kids were fantastic; they had so many ideas! When we did the drama and the play, they were telling us what to do! Painting the old building at

Community Activism in the Shadow of Conflict

Jen Marlowe (OLIVE BRANCH staff)

It took many hours of travel and travails for Palestinian Seeds living in Gaza, Hebron, Bethlehem, Jerusalem, Ramallah, Nablus, Jenin and Jordan to cross dozens of checkpoints and arrive in Jericho. But 55 Palestinian Seeds endured the difficult passage to participate in the seminar entitled "Walking the Walk, not just Talkin' the Talk: Community Activism in the Shadow of Conflict." At the seminar, they examined how they can make a positive impact on Palestinian society in this terrible time. Speakers engaged in nonviolent community activities addressed the issue. Reema Al-Jallad (late mother of Seed Zeina Al-Jallad, see inset) spoke about her work to strengthen the political voice of Palestinian women. Manal Tbaileh described her work using art and drama to help traumatized youth in refugee camps in Nablus. Badawi Qawasmi, from the original 1993 group of Seeds, described his human rights work with the Public Committee Against Torture in Israel (see page 31). Palestinian Minister of Local Government Saeb Erekat also spoke, and the Seeds eagerly challenged him with many questions.

In small-group discussions, participants brainstormed ideas of concrete projects for their communities, and discussed connections with Israeli counterparts in Seeds of Peace. In the spirit of the seminar, the Seeds moved from discussion to action, volunteering for a full day at the local Ayn Al-Sultan refugee camp school. Paired with kids from the refugee camp and led by drama and music professionals, Seeds helped the children experience the joy of creative expression.

In the afternoon, Seeds painted a rundown building at the school which will become a gymnasium. Scores of refugee children helped paint and spent time with the Seeds. By day's end, the building was transformed.

By the seminar's end, the Seeds realized they are not powerless against the horrors they face. They have the ability to influence things for the good, and were inspired to continue to do so.

the school was also a great thing. It was a wonderful feeling for me to help them, because these are my people, and this was my first time helping people in a refugee camp.

Palestinian Minister of Local Government Saeb Erekat spoke to us like we are his sons. He didn't speak like a politician, he spoke like a father. I really respect this man. All the speakers helped us with many things we didn't know before. Badawi Qawasmi especially gave us lots of useful information in his talk on human rights work (see page 31).

On the way back to Gaza, we stopped at the Seeds of Peace Center. I was so excited to go to the Center. For two-and-a-half years I wasn't able to get there. The Center felt like a place that belongs to me. When I saw the pictures on the walls of the other Seeds, it made me feel like this is a home for us. It was 6 a.m. and the weather was great. We could see the Dome of the Rock from a look out place close by.

It was hard getting back into Gaza. At Erez they made us stay outside waiting for an hour and it was so cold. I don't know why they made us stay out there. I felt that they didn't respect us. I hope I will have the chance to participate in more things like this, and that I won't be faced with these hardships. Give the next generation the chance to live in peace. I think it is the time. It is the time to do something — not just say we are Seeds, but do something for peace.



Reema Al-Jallad, mother of Seed Zeina, speaks about her work empowering Palestinian women. Reema passed away suddenly two weeks after the seminar. We will always be grateful to Reema for her energy, love, passion and talent, and for her generosity in sharing them with the Seeds of Peace community.

The Balkans: Burying the Past or the Future?

After a decade of war, Balkan Seeds stand against the ever-present violence and instability which threaten their efforts to build a peaceful future.

The Day the Prime Minister Died

Marko Aksentijevic (Belgrade)

Today I took a walk through my city. I took a jacket, although it was nice out, since weather here is not predictable. By five p.m. there was a snowstorm and I hardly could see where I was going.

On Wednesday, March 12, it was my 19th birthday. I planned to go to a restaurant that night with my family and then spend the weekend with my friends at a pub. But like the weather, everything here is unpredictable. On that day, in the middle of the city, our prime minister Zoran Djindjic was killed. For the past few days there have been a lot of speculations, commemorations and everything that goes with it. These are days of sorrow. He was a great leader and this is a very big loss. He died trying to normalize things here. Now it's up to us to keep it that way. Now, more than ever before in the past three years, it is hard to say what tomorrow brings! But we will fight... we have to fight. Not because we owe it to Djindjic but because we owe it to ourselves.

Our prime minister Zoran Djindjic was killed for trying to normalize things. Now it's up to us to keep going that way. More than ever, we have to fight...not because we owe it to him, but because we owe it to ourselves.

Once again I had to face reality. Once again Serbia was on the front pages and main news. It's like we're addicted to it. Today when I walked out of the library where I study, I passed the monument for the children killed in NATO bombings, past the TV building that was destroyed by bombing and by the October 5th demonstrations (when Milosevic was removed from power), the National Parliament where I stood in the very front on October 5th (not knowing how close to police and possible beating I was), and the future site of a monument for all victims of the wars in nineties. Across the street, I saw City Hall, where we listened to the news at the time when all free media were forbidden. I walked a little further and joined a large group of people standing in the front of a TV. I realized that they were watching a broadcast of police action in the house of one of the suspected assassins of the prime minister. I walked further through the street that is the symbol of the protests in '96 and '97 and all that came after. I stopped at the main square. Too many things happened here: A demonstration in '96-7, a demonstration against bombing, demonstrations in 2000 ... demonstrations for support of Milosevic in the Hague tribunal, the last demonstrations of Seselj before he went to the Hague for war crimes. I arrived at my aunt's place, close to where Djindjic was killed, where now thousands of people are waiting to pay him last respects. I entered my aunt's apartment and saw my whole family. As we planned, we were celebrating my birthday with some delay, just like everyone else in the world does. The main theme (actually the only one)

was recent political events. I don't know what my peers talk about in this situation, but I'm sure it does not have anything to do with anyone's death.

This walk was 15 minutes, but it actually took me 19 years and I keep walking. While writing this I was listening to the news. At the end they reminded us that the "state of emergency" is still on. I can't believe that I even forgot it for a whole day ... that must be because I live it all my life. But I won't give up. I lost too many years here to just walk away. I want my children to live in their motherland but not having to pretend that they are normal. But it's never going to happen if I (we) don't do something! And that's why I'm staying. During the campaign for taking down Milosevic, Djindjic once said "If you cannot afford to give your grandson a toy, fight to give him a future"....

The Tragedy of Tetovo

Besir Ceka, (Tetovo)

I live in Tetova, Macedonia, a town filled with hatred between Albanians and Macedonians, typical for postwar areas such as ours. My town is a mixture of nationalities and religions, which makes it harder to live because of inter-ethnic tension. The same people with the same differences used to live in peace before the war.

A few months ago, some terrible things happened in my town. An Albanian boy was murdered by the police under suspicious circumstances. The next day, revenge came. Some friends of the murdered boy killed another innocent boy, in this case a Macedonian one. After that it was certain that the revenge would continue. Everyone was waiting to find out who was going to be the next victim. All the citizens from my town were afraid, and waiting for the evil to come during the dark, because these murders were committed during the night.

Those nights were without sleep. When I woke up one morning I first saw the pale face of my dad. He told me that we had been the targets of "revenge." I started shaking. He told me that somebody had thrown a bomb in front of our house, but it didn't explode. The police had told him that this model of bomb is very dangerous and very destructive. These were very hard times for my family and me. I couldn't convince my little brother that everything was going to be all right, because I didn't believe it myself. My mom kept shedding tears in silence, so that we wouldn't see her tears and suffer more. My dad stopped going to work; he didn't even have a will to live, knowing that just a few days ago his house and his family were intended to have been hurt.

When I tried to think of the person who did this, I couldn't feel anything but regret for him. I felt very sorry for him who threw the bomb, I felt sorry for the person he is. It was so strange but there wasn't any hatred in my heart towards him or them. This event changed me forever. There is no more hate in my heart towards those who are hurting my feelings and me. I just feel compassion for them, for the fact that their souls are deep in the dark, and full of hatred, the greatest enemy of the human soul.

The people of my country are going through a terrible period of time, as a result of the war. It's not important if the victim is an Albanian citizen or a Macedonian one, we are all human beings and deserve to have decent lives. All I want is peace and nothing more.



Seeds in Sarajevo; reuniting at last for serious work and lots of fun! (photos: Leslie Adelson)

Seminar in Sarajevo: Realizing our Goals

With all my friends from other countries, it was like a dream. I felt like a real Seed, with no prejudices, like someone who doesn't care about borders and who is trying to "build a bridge between two shores."

Aida Popovac (Sarajevo)

I noticed that we had a lot of energy. It's time to use it. It's time to do something for our country, and for ourselves. We don't have to be at camp in Maine to work on this idea. I say, I am a Seed and I am going to help. I have everything I need. First of all, I have a strong will. We are making the conditions for a good beginning.

Amina Alic (Gornji Vakuf)

Ever since I became a Seed I have wondered why there was no center in the Balkans that would enable us to meet during the year. But just by the end of last year I found an answer, that we could meet in our part of the world as well...the climax of the meeting was coexistence. It was interesting to see how Seeds of Peace had had an important impact on every one of us. We weren't the 'political bigots' we used to be. This time we were willing to talk, discuss and tackle the important issues.

Alisa Sutovic (Tuzla)



T-Shirts compete; the 1st Balkan Seeds camp, entitled Youth Peace Initiative, versus the classic SOP model!

Marieke Van Woerkem (Seeds of Peace staff)

Seeds from Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia, Serbia and Croatia arrived at the Sarajevo airport and bus station and exchanged welcoming words and introductions. Some Seeds had known each other for some time, but had not had the chance to meet for years; others had never met before. The goals of the workshop were group building, leadership training, and developing a concrete plan for Seeds of Peace follow-up programs around the Balkans.

We started the retreat by asking participants to share their journey to get to Sarajevo, raising the political problems and dangers still existing in the region. Next we conducted a guided leadership meditation. The Seeds shared with the rest of the group someone

who had either had an impact on the world, an impact on their society or an impact on themselves. By the end we had an array of leaders: Gandhi, John Wallach, parents, football players. As we opened up the discussion, the Seeds quickly veered away from positive role models to politicians who had plunged the Balkans into war and destruction in the 1990s. Seeds talked about the way they were able to come to power, and how these "mass manipulators" used their power to negatively impact and exploit big groups of people, whereas the leaders they had talked about originally were able to use their influence to motivate and empower others.

For lunch we walked into town. It was a glorious day in the old town, where the multiculturalism that Sarajevo was famous for before the war was exhibited by the mosques and churches a minute's walk from one another. The western and eastern influences were clearly reflected in the architecture from one street to the next, as well as in the menus from one café to the next. Even the sounds clearly were a combination of both, greeted as we were at different points in the weekend by both the Islamic call to prayer and the chimes of church bells.

After lunch, the Seeds continued with the leadership theme on a more personal level. They addressed feelings of pride, patriotism and being at home; traits like perfectionism, team spirit, idealism and realism; and the role that Seeds of Peace plays in their lives. We acknowledged that it is possible to find Seeds of Peace on the whole to be a positive experience, while at the same time making their lives more difficult. The resulting discussion dealt with the kind of motivators and role models they would like to be for the rest of their delegations. The more experienced Seeds talked about how hard it truly is to motivate people. Suggested activities included school presentations, meetings with speakers, coexistence projects, and roundtable discussions, open to Seeds, friends and interested others. One theme would be exploring the countries' culture and heritage. As one Seed mentioned, "How can you start to understand other peoples' culture and heritage if you don't even understand your own."

We closed the workshop by giving the participants the opportunity to share with one another experiences and reactions from the weekend.

Coexistence on Campus

Nearly 100 Seeds of Peace graduates from 11 countries are currently enrolled in 34 different US universities. Fifty "Seeds Scholars" spent Thanksgiving together at the Seeds of Peace Global Leadership Initiative Thanksgiving Retreat, brainstorming how to bring Seeds of Peace spirit to their campuses.

Confrontation to Cooperation

By Emily Singer (St. Louis)

Georgetown University has strong Arab and Jewish student communities, which encourages both cooperation and confrontation. When I came to Georgetown, moderate students on both sides felt frustrated with the strained relations between Jews and Arabs on campus. Last year a group of students founded the Students for Middle East Peace Club. The club has been trying since then to facilitate positive interactions between the groups and to give pro-peace students an outlet for their views.

Fellow Seed Iman Azzi and I joined the board of SMEP this semester. The president of the club asked us to join because she felt that with our experiences from Seeds of Peace, we could contribute new perspectives and ideas.

We organized a "Symposium on Peace, Activism, Reconciliation, and Cooperation," which brought together DC area students interested in peace in the Middle East. The conference featured speakers, conflict resolution workshops, and "living room dialogues." The Seeds of Peace speakers were the highlight of the day. Fellow Seed and Georgetown student, Jawad Issa from Gaza, and Israeli Seed/Princeton student Malvina Goldfeld and I spoke about our experience as Seeds of Peace and how it affected our views of the conflict. Later we heard Forsan Hussein speak for the Abraham Fund about the situation of Arab-Israelis and his work to promote coexistence in Israel. The workshops were designed for students to contemplate what they could do in their own communities to promote peace and understanding.

After the conference we held a "Felafel Fest" with Middle Eastern food and a Jewish-Arab cultural band made up of Georgetown students, a belly dancer, and a singing group.

The attendees all said they got a lot out of the conference. Many of the students were relieved to know about a pro-coexistence group, because most people see the radicals all the time and don't get to see cooperation for peace. I am excited to see what else we will do to promote coexistence on campus.

Helping at Home from Far Away

Ibrahim Khader (Nablus)

Leaving my city Nablus under siege to study in the faraway land of Iowa, USA, left me feeling guilty, trapped, and incapable. Being the only Palestinian for miles around, I felt out of the loop of Palestinian society. I wanted to do something that would pull me back in and connect me with the people in Palestine and do something to help my family, friends, and community, who are suffering under military occupation.

The idea came from a phone conversation with my mother in her office in the Palestinian Ministry of Education. I told her I had organized a group of American friends who were committed to the work of peace and justice and wanted to help us but we weren't sure what to do. Right away she responded: "Do a fundraising campaign for the tawjihi students."

She explained to me that most of the Palestinian senior high school students were struggling to pay a fee of 120 NIS (\$26) to register for their tawjihi, or final matriculation examinations. Without completing the tawjihi, these students will have no chances of attending university, and will have few opportunities for economic advancement. Not only would they suffer as individuals, but the Palestinian people would be deprived of the skills that they could develop with a university education. As we chatted over the phone, I began formulating a

vision: I would ask my friends to help in a fund raising activity for these students. To focus the project, we chose to concentrate on Nablus, my birthplace and hometown.

We chose to call our new organization LEARN, "Leading Education And Relief for Nablus." Our initial goal was to collect \$2600. Our college Church Relations group agreed to host a bank account, and the Dining Services agreed to put donation boxes in all the cafeterias and food facilities on campus.

LEARN, a group of 12 American and international students and a faculty member, had an outstanding reception from the local community. Students, faculty, and local residents offered their full support to our project. We visited churches, Islamic centers, and social gatherings. It would take less than ten minutes to explain to a congregation about LEARN and the offerings would come flowing like water into the donation boxes.

We were so successful by December that we decided to raise our goal to \$5200. In 70 days, LEARN had \$9001.68 in its account. In 70 days, we received media coverage in Sacramento, Minneapolis, Chicago, Washington DC, and New York City. LEARN even made it to the ticker of a national news channel!

We were successful for two reasons. First, because of the noble humanitarian cause for which we were campaigning; no one can claim that helping students register for exams is a terrorist act. Second, we did not politicize this effort. Our advertisement was focused on the economic hardship that Nablus was going through, and the fact that students and their families were burdened by the cost of registration fees.

It was a lot of hard work to start LEARN, but I was so proud that we were able to help these students. We received a letter from Ms. Juman Karaman, Director of Education in Nablus, stating, "in the name of all 70,000 students in Nablus, I thank you."

The Seeds Safety Net

By Karen Karniol-Tambour
(Netanya)

The Thanksgiving gathering provided us Seeds away from home with a home away from home. While our American classmates traveled home to their parents for the holiday, we experienced precisely the one thing we could not experience back home: each other's company. Thanksgiving was the first time since the start of the second intifada in 2000 that I spent so much time with Palestinians, Egyptians, and Jordanians.

The weekend brought out many emotions. It gave us a place to reflect about what was happening back home, and discuss it while we are all detached from that reality. It was an experience to see Seeds whom I have not seen since camp, and listen how these years of violence have affected them.

In addition to talking about home, Thanksgiving was a wonderful opportunity to speak about the experiences we were all going through: adjusting to life in the USA in an American university. Coming from similar backgrounds, we all shared a certain sense of culture shock, and were encountering a new kind of lifestyle that took some adjusting to.

It was nice to share funny stories, things we were surprised by, and the mundane details of our lives—classes, grades, athletics, and extra-curricular activities.

I have felt since I came here a sense of futility; violence carried on back home, and all I could do from here was listen to the news and mourn the dead. Just as at home, Seeds seek to change reality for the better. We discussed what actions

are within our reach as college students in the US. As all of us are interested in the same sort of changes, I found that we had much to learn from each other's experiences. Many Seeds are older and have already successfully organized meaningful activities on their campuses, and they had valuable advice to give. I left with a collection of inventive ideas to contemplate when I got back to school.

Simply hearing so many Seeds discuss their plans and actions was empowering. Seeds were active everywhere, whether it was starting Jewish-Arab dialogue groups, raising awareness about the Middle East, participating in student groups and student government, or writing for a newspaper. It made me see that there were many of us across campuses in the US, all struggling for the same causes and mobilizing our own campuses. This energized me to want to get involved and do what I can as a college student to change what I dislike in this world. I felt that together, we can make things happen.

Altogether, Thanksgiving provided me with the feeling of a safety net; there was a huge family I was part of, the Seeds family, that will be there for me, help me get through my hard times, support me, and listen to me. With so many of us going through the same things on different college campuses, I felt like I was part of a stronger, larger force that I could rely on.

Why We're Here

By Mohamad Matar (Gaza)

I grew up in Gaza, but now I'm studying on scholarship in a high school in Massachusetts, called Deerfield Academy. I am now in my

senior year. This Thanksgiving weekend, I joined 42 other Seeds of Peace graduates who are now international students at high schools and colleges all over the United States. We gathered together in Lakeville, Connecticut, to discuss issues concerning college life, campus activism, and our role as Seeds of Peace at our colleges.

A number of students shared their own experiences and problems that they are having, or used to have. The roommate annoyance, the culture shock, academic problems, and diversity at college were all discussed. Seeds were telling each other stories of how they didn't give up and got over their problems. Adapting to a new culture depends mainly on how you learn things. The best advice, we decided, is to be open-minded and at the same time remember who you are and what you are here for.

We discussed the roles that we should play in our campuses as Seeds. We are considered representatives of our countries, ourselves, and of Seeds of Peace. We can use the skills that we learned at Seeds of Peace to listen carefully, discuss politely, and participate effectively everywhere. Making presentations about Seeds of Peace in our different campuses and communities is a great way to spread the word—and that will help the next generations of Seeds applicants to be admitted to colleges.

In addition, there was a lot of time for fun. The workshop happened during the holidays of Ramadan for Muslims and Hanukah for Jews, so students from both religions decided to spend an evening in the kitchen cooking *maqlube*, a traditional Palestinian dish, and *latkes*, a traditional Jewish food for Hanukah. There was time for going out bowling and other fun activities. We all enjoyed our time together.

Seeds are active everywhere, starting Jewish-Arab dialogue groups, raising awareness about the Middle East, participating in student government, writing for newspapers. There are many of us across campuses in the United States, all struggling for the same causes and mobilizing our own campuses. I felt that together, we can make things happen.



Seeds Scholars at the Global Leadership Initiative Thanksgiving Retreat (photos: Jen Marlowe)

Breaking the Language Barrier

At the Seeds of Peace Center's Language Workshop, the Model UN, and school presentations, Israeli Seeds and Palestinian Seeds build skills of cross-cultural communication

photo courtesy of Ethan Schechter



Arab and Jewish Seeds of Peace diplomats take a break from negotiations at the Model United Nations

Diplomatic Language

Orly Bogler (Haifa)

Model United Nations (MUN) is a program that teaches teenagers the art of diplomacy and how to represent a country as a diplomat. This is an international program held in different places around the world. This time it was held in Kfar Shemaryahu at the American International School. The delegates were chosen from schools around Israel, and this year, as in the past couple of years, Seeds of Peace got a chance to participate.

Our delegation was to represent the Palestinian Authority, and I figured I was relatively knowledgeable about the issue, and that the research wouldn't be too difficult. I was wrong. Preparing for the MUN consisted of two months of meeting with the delegation, which included Seeds Netta, Shadi, Tamar, Nardeen, Gitit, Ethan and myself. We researched the

subject at home (hours of surfing the net), wrote position and resolution papers, learned the procedures, and, most difficult, found fancy clothes.

When we got there on Thursday afternoon I felt a bit lost, surrounded by people who were more interested in whom I was representing than they were in my name. I quickly learned that when someone calls "Hey Palestine!" I should turn, and in no time I, an Israeli, was making allies and calling for the rights of the Palestinians.

My committee was the Commission on Regional Cooperation. We dealt with a number of issues, including terrorism, affordable medicine, copyrights, patents, pirating, and censorship. I participated in the discussions and debates, voiced my opinions, and joined my allies in order to pass resolutions. The Palestinian Authority has observer status in the UN, which meant that I couldn't actually vote on any resolutions, but that wasn't a problem.

At the Model United Nations I learned the art of diplomacy. Throughout the whole weekend, I was no longer referred to as Orly, but as a delegate of the Palestinian National Authority. I no longer spoke as I, but as we. The diplomacy game has its own rules: for example, if I want to say something, I can't just say it. Certain things can be said only at certain times and in a certain manner. These are considered either a point or a motion. These included expressions such as "Point of personal privilege — can you please open the window?" or "Motion to table a resolution." A motion to table a resolution can only be said at a specific time, and if missed, there's no turning back, as that would be considered "Out of order." In order to really be an excellent diplomat, you may be required to bend the truth a little, all so that whomever you're representing comes out on top.

The MUN experience was a unique opportunity to practice skills I had acquired since joining Seeds of Peace. At first it was a bit difficult to represent the Palestinians, even though after hours of coexistence, you'd expect me to be an expert. In no time I got over this "dual nationality syndrome" and was putting the Israeli delegate on the spot with intrusive questions, in a diplomatic attitude. When I told my friends and family about the experience they wondered how I was capable of representing the obvious "other side." I told them that I know what I believe, and I think it's very healthy to put yourself in the other side's shoes every once in a while, to gain a different perspective. It was interesting to learn about the Palestinians in a context that's different from coexistence.

As for diplomacy, I'm not too sure if I believe in it. I find it somewhat of a smarmy and slippery practice, but that too can come in handy every once in a while. It was still an excellent experience. Needless to say, I had a wonderful time. I got to play in the adult world, dress up, talk in big words, and be diplomatic. After four days, I went back to the teenage world, the baggy clothes, the slang, and the straightforwardness we all love so much.

Presenting: The Other Side

Adir Yanko (Ashkelon)

Since I joined Seeds of Peace, I have been dealing with comments from classmates about my "treachery," "cooperating with the terrorists" and "treason." I had to put an end to it. For me, Seeds of Peace is about persuading other people, who haven't been to camp, that there is a different way than the present way of relating to the other side. Lauren is another Seed from my school. We spent time thinking about what we could do to change people's ideas about Seeds. I know that the vision is difficult to understand and believe in if you haven't participated in the program. But we decided to try by inviting Arab Seeds to join us and give a presentation to the ninth grade at my school.

As a preparation to the presentation, we entered the five classes that were chosen to participate in the "mission." We asked what the word "peace" means to them, and the first thing that crossed their minds when they heard it. Then we each described a personal experience from camp. Lauren talked about climbing on the obstacle course at camp with Lana, a Palestinian Seed. Then the class discussed Lauren's experience. "Raise your hand if you'd choose a Palestinian to reach together to the top." We split the class into those people who would act like Lauren and those who wouldn't.

Step by step, we began a conversation with the students and felt a mutual understanding. The preparation stage went smoothly. But we didn't notice how much we succeeded until the Arab Seeds arrived for the presentation.

When Arab Seeds Qais, Tarek and Amir arrived at school, we entered the auditorium with 100 people staring at us. This was my chance to prove to all the people that they were wrong. There I was, standing with Arab teenagers on the same stage in front of them.

We introduced ourselves and explained what it means to be a Seed of Peace, about John Wallach's vision, about camp. We showed a movie about camp. I think they were surprised by everything, especially how articulate the Arab teenagers were. I could feel that some of them imagined themselves as Seeds.

After the film the audience was quiet and concentrated on us. We had long discussions about camp and the conflict. After the presentation, dozens of students rushed up on stage to talk to the Arab Seeds face to face, and to ask how they could be selected to come to camp. We felt the excitement in the air.

I had hoped that this presentation would change something in their minds, and it did.

دشء ب. پاماخ طنتت ف دل ولح لة صرع طأساى دجاهاق تان شاي ر م ض عاس ج! قاز ه نا حاضا با كات غاى كا صا خا

Hebrew/Arabic Language Workshop

Opening the Doors

Mirit Gorohovsky
(Ashdod)

I had three not-so-fun years of learning Arabic in school. Every year I learned a sentence. If you do the math you'll see that I learned three sentences. The language we learned in school was book language, and we would have sounded like idiots speaking this way to people our age. Last year in school I was so happy to finish my Arabic requirement, but now I have a chance to learn in a different way, without a screaming, terrifying teacher and a class of people whose interest in learning Arabic was like their interest in the reproductive habits of the ancient ant.

Walid Abed Elhadi of the Center staff teaches a language workshop called Mother Tongue. We work in

Learning & Laughing

Ahmad Nasser El Din
(Jerusalem)

Elef and alef, bet and bet, shalom and salam. Hebrew is a beautiful language, just like Arabic.

I live in East Jerusalem. I need to know Hebrew because when I go to an Israeli mall or restaurant, I have to use Hebrew. Communicating with Jewish people is easier in their own language. I think it will be easier at checkpoints if I can say "Shalom." The soldiers always speak in Hebrew. Even if I don't understand, I just nod. If I don't learn Hebrew, I might nod by mistake to the question, "Do you have a bomb?"

Now that I have Jewish friends I have another reason to learn Hebrew. When they laugh, I want to understand without having to ask.

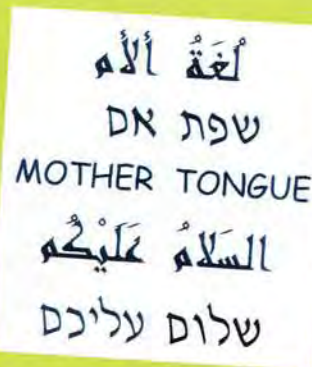
Language is like a key to open doors to other people's worlds. If you don't have the keys, you pass by the doors and never know what's inside.

pairs, a Jew and an Arab. We change partners every week.

I started with Lana. I taught her Hebrew and she taught me Arabic. I taught her the *aleph bet* and the words to an Aviv Gefen

song. She taught me words with the alphabet letters: for example, "n": "Nur" in Arabic is "light," similar to Hebrew "candle," "ner." The word for strawberry, "tut," is the same in both. I learned to say, "ya zalameh," "hey man."

Arabic is important, because it's the language of the region I live in. Our teacher, Walid, says language is like a key to open doors to other people's worlds. If you don't have the keys, you pass by the doors and never know what's inside.



My first partner in the workshop, Aviad, and I taught each other our alphabets, with a word for every letter. For aleph, he taught me "akhi" in Hebrew, which is "my brother" just like in Arabic. Bet, "bayit," is house,

the same in both languages.

What makes it easier to learn is that my friends are teaching me. I teach Arabic and they teach me Hebrew. I think it's harder for Israelis to learn Arabic because some letters are hard to pronounce. When Israelis mispronounce letters the Arabs start laughing. They don't mind, they laugh too, and when I make mistakes they laugh at me, and that makes learning fun.

HOME FOR THEIR HOLIDAYS

On a Mission to Open Friends' Minds: A Weekend in Afula

One day my friends were telling me for the millionth time that I should leave Seeds of Peace because Palestinians and Arabs are only the enemy. I thought to myself, why not invite my friend Sakhir and prove to them that Arabs can be our friends? Sakhir and I used to fight in coexistence discussions, but then we became close friends. He was happy to help.

When we met on the basketball court I could feel the tension in the air between my friends and Sakhir. But after a while they started to talk and we finished with a basketball game.

Before our evening meal, my family prays together. Sakhir, as a good friend, respected

my family and was with us while we prayed. He asked my father about the prayers. After dinner we hung out with my friends in the city. I am happy to say we completed our mission and my friends no longer believe that all Arabs are the enemy.

Avi Israeli (Afula)

I visited Avi in Afula for a weekend after we became friends. We became friends in a strange way. When we met at the Center I never thought Avi was going to be a friend of mine. On the way home one time we started fighting in the car and then we started to talk

and we found out that we are both crazy. After that we started getting closer.

When I got to Afula I was surprised by the way his parents treated me. I was treated the same as any of Avi's friends and maybe better. When I met Avi's friends I found out that some of them didn't like Arabs, so Avi and I decided to show them that Arabs are not aliens. We started playing sports with the guys that really didn't like Arabs. It seemed that they started to like me and eventually we became friends. I was very happy about that. My weekend in Afula was great and I thank Avi's parents for everything.

Sakhir Al-Arbsi (Kafr Qara)

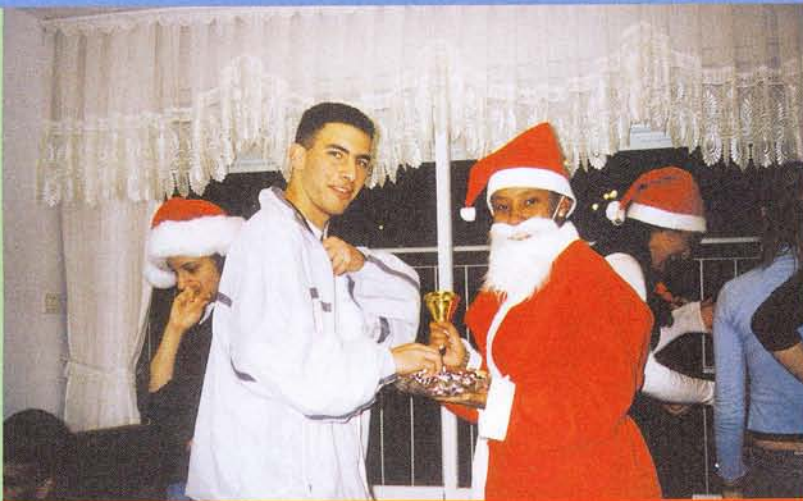


photo: Jen Marlowe

Aklile "Santa Claus" Kebede rings in Christmas with Amir Haddad (above). Over twenty Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Seeds (below) came to Amir's to celebrate the holiday.



photo: Mr. Haddad

Lights in the Darkness

**Mohamed Nasser Edin
(Jerusalem)**

I was really interested in participating in home visits because I'd never been in an Israeli home before. During Hanukah, an Israeli friend of mine, Tal, had a gathering at her place and invited me over. We spent a nice evening with her family and friends, especially when her mother gave us Hanukah sweets and her father told us the story of the eight candles in his own humorous way. Also, I won't forget my new seven year-old friend, Tal's younger brother, who was making a weird sound with his mouth. As a matter of fact it was so weird that I kept chasing him around the house so he would stop doing it.

Unfortunately, what upset me that night was the checkpoint we had to stop at on the way to Tal's place. We were stopped by security guards and told we weren't allowed to enter her city. The driver wanted to take us home and to forget the whole thing because we were told to turn back and leave in such an insulting way.

I called Ned, who suggested we ask Tal to come to the checkpoint and explain that we were her friends. To my surprise, the guards didn't even listen to her. It was Tal's father who finally convinced the soldiers to let us in for a couple of hours.

For Christmas, Hanukah, Ramadan and weekend visits, Israeli and Palestinian Seeds open their homes to each other during the holiday season. They discuss their experiences celebrating holidays for the first time, eating tasty new foods, introducing fellow Seeds to their families and having fun!

A Family Affair

Tal Shavit (Reut)

I wanted to give my friends a chance to see how things are done in my family, so on December 17th twenty happy Seeds and a couple hungry staff members came to my house. We had problems getting the town security to allow Palestinians into my town, so we started, in the great Seeds tradition, really late. We lit six beautiful menorahs and sang Hanukah songs, getting our Arab friends to clap and stomp their feet just when the time was right. We ate *sufganiot*, dough deep fried and filled with something tasty (usually jam). In my family, parents pass down to their children a special secret *sufganiot* recipe (that everyone agreed is much more tasty than the regular ones).

The best thing that came out of this was my little brother's opinion. Before the party I told my seven year-old brother that friends from camp were coming to celebrate Hanukah. He told me he didn't want Arabs to come to our house because he was afraid. For the whole evening he played and talked to everyone in the room and had a great time. The day after he said, "So when are the Arabs coming again?" I asked if he was still afraid and he said, "No, they can come any time."

Food and Friends

Some of the foods were familiar to my friends but some weren't. There was *musakhan*, *sfeeha*, *mahshee*, *kubbe* and soup and salads. I explained to my friends that before eating we say a short prayer. We shared some information about Moslems fasting on Ramadan and Jews fasting on Yom Kippur.

This visit will remain stuck in my memory. Despite the conflict we are living through, I feel deeply happy when I find friends like Mor, Liat and Ethan around me. It should be my right to have freedom of transportation without checkpoints so I can visit my Israeli friends in return.

Amani Zuaiter (Jerusalem)



photo: Jen Markowe

Amany shares kata'ef with friends.

Sweetening the Feast

Amany Jaber (Taybeh)

Each year, Moslems welcome Ramadan with a lot of rejoicing. We fast and feast during this holy month according to the Muslim principles. It is always a special atmosphere, but this year was different. I invited Seeds to be with my family for the Iftar (evening break fast). Our guests were Anat and Yael, two Israeli Seeds, and Hiba, another Seed from Taybeh. When they arrived in my childhood neighborhood I felt blessed for being a Seed. It reinforced my belief that Seeds are special and always pursue difference.

The first thing we wanted to show our guests was my home location, which is only 10 meters from the 1967 border. After that, we had the Iftar meal, which included the best cooking in the world, my mom's. We chatted, and my dad explained what Ramadan is all about; we had fun! My family got to know the people who hold a remarkable place in my life.

This was the first time we invited non-Arabs to the Iftar, and it added new sweetness to Ramadan. I felt like my family and the Seeds had known each other for a long time; the room was full of laughs, smiles, and satisfaction.

The most exciting thing was the beautiful communication that took place that evening. The hugest achievement was the way my mom communicated with my friends. She doesn't speak English at all, and not Hebrew either, but she discovered that communication doesn't depend only on language.

My First Ramadan

Anat Ziskind (Jerusalem)

One of my most important experiences in Seeds of Peace was when Amany Jaber from Taybeh invited me and other Seeds and staff members to celebrate Ramadan with her family. It was the first time I had celebrated Ramadan, so it was very exciting for me.

When we arrived, Amany and her family gave us very warm hospitality. Her father explained that Ramadan is a very special time for the family to be together, and that they fast during the day for a month in order to identify with poor people. At the end of every day they have a big meal, called Iftar. We watched on television all the worshipers praying near the black stone called the Ka'aba- the Muslim holy place in Mecca.

Amany's mother served us dinner in the living room, which was covered with carpet and pillows. It was nice sitting on the floor and eating together with the whole family. In the middle of the floor were the special delicacies of Ramadan, which included rice, many kinds of meat, soup, different salads, and more. The dinner was delicious.

While eating dessert, we looked at pictures from Amany's sister's wedding and from camp. We were sitting together talking for a long time and had the opportunity to get closer to Amany and her family. I think it is not so often that you get the opportunity to have this kind of experience, and I got to know some Muslim customs, which was very special for me.

Wary of War

Seeds of Peace from the Middle East, South Asia, the Balkans and the USA present perspectives on the possible war in Iraq. They describe reactions in their countries as people around the world brace for the war and its consequences.



Abida, Kabul



Amr, Sana'a



Adham, Jerusalem



Ayelet, Jerusalem



Rina, Istanbul

Letters to the Leaders

Dear President Bush, Prime Minister Blair, President Chirac, and President Hussein,

As a Palestinian who has lived her life under occupation and experienced suffering from war, I know what a conflict means. An attack on Iraq will not help achieve peace in the world. On the contrary, I believe it will impede the peace process. War, killing civilians and destroying a country cannot lead to peace. Forcibly changing the government, forbidding people their right to self-determination and denying them their human rights breeds more conflict and creates more opposition. Moreover, the consequences of a war will be felt around the world.

Many people in the world do not support the attack on Iraq. They believe negotiations should resolve the conflict. In my opinion, justice and equality must be present in the world. Every country has a right to possess weapons for self-defense, but no country should be allowed to utilize the weapons as a way to impose control and power over others.

As a Palestinian, I hope that no war will take place in Iraq or any country. To this end, everyone must work to make the world a better place. Peace doesn't come about through the work of isolated individuals, but through all of us working together and creating just compromises. Only then can we all live together peacefully.

Reem Yusuf (Ramallah)

Dear President Bush and PM Blair,

I write this letter to you as a responsible citizen of the world. Over the last couple of years, I feel that the United States and United Kingdom have been behaving like big brothers to all other countries.

I appreciate your efforts to bring about peace, but I disagree on the issue of invading Iraq. It is the opinion of people all over the world, especially in India, that you are waging this war to control the price of oil, and that the ones who will benefit will be you and your countries.

I agree that there is such a thing as a just war, but I also believe that such wars belong to history, or to mythology. The conditions for justifying a war in the new millennium have become more stringent with the frightening advances in nuclear technology and our own greater sensitivity to human suffering.

War is like applying a muscle relaxant to a fractured hand. It relaxes the hand for a short time, but aggravates the problem later. The war on Iraq may bring peace, but a short-term one. It will bring a Pyrrhic victory, if any. The actual key to peace is compassion, understanding the "enemy," and a real love for all men. May God grant you all the three.

Ankit Gordhandas (Mumbai)

Consider the Civilians

Amr Al-Zain (Sana'a, Yemen)

As world leaders sit and argue about war and weapons, I think: what will be the fate of the Iraqi people? Public opinion here in Yemen is clear. There is a lot of anti-American feeling. People have nothing but criticism for those who support the war, especially for the Arab countries that are hosting American military bases in their lands.

There have been two major protests here recently. In the last one, the number of protesters reached 300,000. The streets were blocked. Protesters carried signs against the war and against Bush's decisions. Signs read "No War on Iraq" or "No War for Oil." Protesters also carried flags of both Iraq and Palestine. They were protesting the Israeli occupation of Palestine, and American aid for Israel. They regard America and Israel as an alliance, and believe this war is against both Palestine and Iraq.

One problem I had with the protest was that many students participated not from their own hearts but because their schools sent them out into the streets. Some of them went to have fun. Personally, I can't believe this is simply a "war for oil." Is America willing to take such a risk for oil? The arguments Bush makes are not very clear, and I don't

understand the true aims of this war. Underneath the political struggle between world leaders is a humanitarian crisis, and I worry that this is not even being considered.

Anti-War, not Anti-Israel

Miriam Liebman (Detroit)

War is war. If soldiers are being sent home in body bags, President Bush will not look like a war hero. And our 18 year-olds are not going to be the only ones killed in this war. What about the innocent people in Iraq, and innocent Americans killed because Saddam may attack us after we attack them? And what about Israel?

America was recently on an orange alert. Red is next; red means an attack on us is very likely. There has been high security at various Jewish locations. I'm scared.

We know all too well, especially in this country, that Osama bin Laden is to blame for the September 11th attacks. But at the anti-war protest on February 15th in Detroit, some people found a way to blame Israel for 9/11 and for the impending war with Iraq. People at the rally weren't just against the war, they were trying to get their own organizations' messages across. I think it's ridiculous.

I feel very strongly against the war, but it was awkward being at that rally. It felt very much like when I was at a pro-Israel rally and someone was holding up a sign saying "fewer Arabs is better."

In front of my house we have a huge blue sign with large white letters saying, "NO WAR." My cousin came over to my house recently and saw it. He told me he is also against the war but will not put up signs like the one my family has because it may be implying that we are anti-Israel.

I don't know how to express myself. I want to protest the war, but at the same time, I have a problem being part of a movement that is so anti-Israel. You can't blame Israel for all the problems in the Middle East. Israel and the Palestinians have nothing to do with Iraq or September 11th.

Abandoning Afghanistan?

Abida Attazada (Kabul)

God forbid, should America go to war against Iraq, I do not doubt this will negatively affect

the "kettle of fish" situation in Afghanistan.

The bit of calm we have under America's guard will be over once America invades Iraq. Organizations and armed groups in the north and south of Afghanistan will rebel against the transitional government. Taliban groups, elements of Al Qaida, and other terrorist groups will be free to operate against the state. Holland and Germany have warned that if the situation in Afghanistan gets worse,

Many people here oppose war, knowing how it is to see bombs exploding overhead, while you fight for your life in the basement. Besir, Tetovo

We must give the US credit for fighting terrorism. But action in Iraq will only complicate matters. Rahil, Mumbai

There are already enough refugees in the Middle East. Oren, Netanya

America was recently on high alert...there has been high security at Jewish locations. I'm scared. Miriam, Detroit

I can't believe this is simply a "war for oil." Is America willing to take such a risk for oil? I don't understand the true aims of this war. Amr, Sana'a

they will remove their soldiers.

Reconstruction of Afghanistan will remain incomplete; many countries have expressed willingness to support our government, national army and economy, but those promises will soon be forgotten when America and the world turn their attention toward Iraq. The UN and foreign organizations are still needed to help immigrants and refugees who have gone to camps in Pakistan and Iran. An American

presence is needed here to prevent the intervention of Pakistan and Iran in Afghanistan's internal affairs.

Bombs in the Basement

Besir Ceka (Tetovo)

As a person who has seen the consequences of war, I am against any war, this war as well. War caused terrifying things in my country, Macedonia. The people are traumatized, no institution in our state works properly. The postwar period is terrible; people are facing economic crisis. The standard of living has decreased dramatically. If there is war in Iraq, the Iraqi people will be faced with these things.

As far as my country is concerned, there are diverse opinions on this issue. Our president has decided to support America in this war, even sending soldiers to fight there. There have been a few organized demonstrations against war here in my country. They were mostly organized by NGOs, and many antiwar demonstrators participated. Many people I know are against this war because they know how it is to see bombs exploding over your head, while you are fighting for life in the basement. My family and I are with this group.

Still, there are people who are for the war. They argue that Iraq and Saddam Hussein are a threat to the world. I kind of agree with them; if there were strong evidence that Iraq possesses nuclear weapons, and other weapons of mass destruction prohibited by the UN, I would be for this war. But the UN inspectors have not found anything yet to prove that the rude regime of Saddam is endangering the stability of the world. We must find a peaceful solution.

Protest with a Pen

Rahil Kacheria (Mumbai)

I would like to discuss our role as citizens of the world, regarding the present conflict with Iraq. We must express our opinion regarding this war, its dimensions and repercussions. A protest is held almost everyday in my part of the world. I prefer to protest individually by writing about it, making people aware of the repercussions and urging people to speak out against it. I strongly oppose this unjustified display of military strength.

I am not alone in my protest. Not one person I know supports this war. Most of my relatives

and friends living in the US are tired of the stagnation of the American economy and the Bush administration. This is why I feel that American people are opposed to the war.

America may feel it is fighting terrorism, which we must give them credit for, as no other nation has made an effective attempt. But I believe they will only complicate matters by taking action against Iraq; they may even set the stage for a third world war. Most people in India feel that this war will trigger a chain reaction in Islamic nations, increasing tensions and religious conflicts. India is next to the Middle East and already involved in a violent dispute; people are genuinely afraid of finding themselves in the middle of another conflict.

The massive demonstrations that crowded the world's streets have renewed my hope for the prospect of a peaceful world. The time has come for us to leap over diplomatic and political barriers to prevent a ruinous war. As a proud Seed of Peace I have no greater joy than

Wary of War

crisis, balance our population, decrease unemployment and poverty, improve education, and fight terrorism. The Turkish government is still debating who shall be the commander of Turkish military troops, a Turkish or an American general. Our government is preparing for war and yet asking for help from European countries for the possible immigration of "thousands" of Iraqis from northern Iraq after the first attack. Still our government is obliged to support the US in this fight against Saddam. We are turning into fighters against our own will.

In the eyes of many Western countries, Turkey is a perfect geopolitical base for the first launch. Nobody cares about the future

status of our nation.

The war could delay or cancel Turkey's full membership in the European Union, destroying years of work with a single act of hostility. However, if we do not participate in this war, our ties with the US will be damaged, and the Turkish government cannot take that risk because US economic support is so important.

Insufficient Intelligence

Oren Karniol-Tambour (Netanya)

As a justification for war, the Bush administration has tried to convince the world



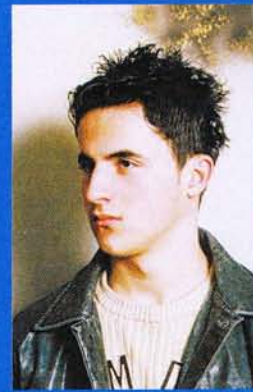
Sharif, Jerusalem



Rahil, Mumbai



Oren, Netanya



Besir, Tetovo



Reem, Ramallah

to see people rise up and demand to be governed by seekers of peace and not by governments with vested interests. I urge you to speak out against this terrible war, a war that will surely affect our generation the most. May good sense prevail.

Turkey: Torn Between Two Allies

Rina Onur (Istanbul)

As in 1991, during the last Gulf War, Turkey is being asked to aid the war effort. What were the outcomes of the last war but death and destruction? This war will not help our nation.

The majority of the Turkish population is against this war, because it is obvious that the outcome will bring nothing pleasant here. We are trying to recover from a national economic

I have no greater joy than to see people demand to be governed by seekers of peace and not by vested interests. Rahil, Mumbai

Iraq may have an authoritarian regime, but the change must come from the Iraqi people. Adham, Jerusalem

An attack in Iraq will pave the way for more Al-Qaida members. Roman, Kabul

of a connection between Iraq and Al-Qaida, using intelligence reports as evidence. On the whole it was quite unconvincing. In Secretary of State Colin Powell's address to the Security Council, Iraq was made out to pose an immediate threat to its neighbors, especially Israel, and the world. But in my opinion, Israel doesn't seem to see the same immediate threat that the US suggests, even though Secretary Powell's case is largely built on Israeli intelligence. If Israel did, the Israeli Air Force might attack on its own, as it did in 1981, destroying Iraq's nuclear reactor.

The prospect of Saddam Hussein being removed from power does suit Israel, and it's completely understandable. Saddam Hussein has attacked Israel in the past, and he is a dangerous and paranoid man, who abuses and tortures his people. But is the removal of Saddam Hussein really worth the deaths of thousands of Iraqis? Is it worth destroying millions of homes? There are

already enough refugees in the Middle East.

It is terrifying that the United States intends to go to war with or without UN approval, and doesn't even see the need to conceal it. President Bush's statement that the Security Council will become "irrelevant" if it doesn't back the US reinforces feelings that the United States sees itself in control of the world.

Saddam and his regime are obviously a problem that must be dealt with, but the US's lack of will to find a peaceful solution causes even more problems. War should only be a last resort.

Democracy Hypocrisy

Sharif Qaddoumi (Jerusalem)

Saddam Hussein isn't a devil that intends to destroy everyone and spread disease and poverty. In my opinion, he is a man who refused to be a slave to the American rulers. So what if he has weapons of mass destruction? Israel has nuclear warheads. How many do you think the US has? How come they are allowed to have such weapons and Iraq isn't? What's wrong with having a defense system to ensure your country's safety? How come Israel has the right to occupy Palestinian territories to ensure its safety?

The world stood up and announced that they don't approve of the war Britain and America are about to begin. Where is their so-called democracy? How come they don't care about the nuclear weapons of Korea and Russia and China? I believe America isn't interested in the safety of Arabs or the world. I think they want the high quality oil that lies beneath the soil of Iraq. If that is democracy, I am glad not to be living in a democratically ruled country.

War: Al-Qaida's Interest

Roman Miraka (Kabul)

I have heard a message from the Afghan people around me: Iraq should be disarmed peacefully. We have tried the bitter taste of war. Russia invaded our country, killing at least five million people. After that, foreign and domestic Islamic parties made us a soccer ball, gleefully kicking us everywhere. The Taliban, trained in Pakistani camps and protected by the US, came into power. The US had hopes for them, but did not find any success. On September 11, they inflicted pain on the Americans.

The politicians say the US doesn't have any enmity with Muslims and Arabs. But it is the policy of the US to support the Israelis against the Palestinians. Many Muslims say this is not a war against terrorism and weapons of mass destruction, but against Muslims and Islam. If it is a matter of weapons of mass destruction, why doesn't the US disarm Israel and North Korea? The US supports Israel no matter what. North Korea is acting as if they are ready to provoke a war with the US. But to me, the main goal of the US seems to be controlling the oil regions in Iraq and dividing Iraq into two parts, one for

Iraqis and the other for Kurds. They will occupy Iraq as they are occupying Afghanistan.

I love peace and stability. I don't want war in any part of the world. As I see the demonstrations and protests and check people's thoughts here, I can see that if the US stays on this path, many American interests in Afghanistan will be attacked. An attack in Iraq will pave the ground for Al-Qaida members. Everyone knows that terrorism and Al-Qaida are aimed especially against the Americans, and their population in Iraq can target the Americans easily as well.

Masks of Fear in Jerusalem

The Wrong Strategy

Adham Ghazali (Jerusalem)

Like most Palestinians, I am totally against this war. We believe it will affect us economically, and perhaps directly. We are connected, as Arabs, with the Iraqi people. We don't like to watch them dying. Due to the closure in the Palestinian territories, most Palestinians can't demonstrate and express their feelings. If I had the chance, I would not wait one second to go demonstrate and say my opinion on this issue.

We Palestinians in Jerusalem can get gas masks from the Israeli authorities so we got masks despite knowing we will not use them. The Palestinian people in the West Bank and Gaza Strip cannot get gas masks. I think that Israel should give them masks because they occupy the territory. My younger sister keeps asking me, "If the war comes, will we go to school?" She is scared of the gas masks. She told me she doesn't want to wear it because she will look like an alien.

A friend of mine says if America starts the war and the Arabs don't stop it, the next target will be us, the Palestinians. People are afraid Israel will transfer the Palestinian people to other Arab countries.

I think Iraq does not have weapons of mass destruction, but if it does, it is not a cause for war. These weapons must be destroyed in the entire Middle East, including Israel. America's strategy is not the way to get peace and silence in the world. Iraq may have an authoritarian government with a lot of problems, but the

change must come from the Iraqi people and not from outside forces.

Disrupting Daily Life

Ayelet Steiner (Jerusalem)

Don't people understand that war isn't the way to solve problems? In fact, it is the worst way to solve problems. Kids who don't even understand what this war is about are going to suffer. I don't think there are many people who enjoy sitting in a room scared, hoping the bombs will miss them.

I don't know if Iraq has weapons of mass destruction, but as a girl who lives in Israel — I am terrified. I am scared because I don't know what I am facing and because no one else knows what to expect. In Israel people are talking about the war all the time and are getting paranoid and stressed out about it. People have even started to plan their life according to the American administration's plans. I don't want to change my life according to a war. It embarrasses me.

Just like everyone else, I want to feel safe. I want to know that when I wake up in the morning I don't need to take a box with a gas mask with me wherever I go. I know the mask is supposed to protect me, but the thought that I might actually need to use it terrifies me.

I think the world has enough suffering. If we choose to invest money in something, why not invest it in solving problems? We really don't need to invest it in causing them. From my experience, I have learned that war creates hatred and pain.

Taking Root In Kabul

Afghan Seeds have struggled against extraordinary odds and managed incredible accomplishments. Finally free of the repressive Taliban regime, they can let their talents and abilities bloom.

Freedom to Learn

Roman Miraka (Bagrame)

Seeds of Peace granted me courage to establish a free English course for those who didn't have the opportunity to learn English. During the Taliban, I studied English secretly in the house of a former English teacher of the Bagrame high school. On the way to the lessons, I was terrified of the Taliban. I walked by them with my English books hidden and my body in shock. I was not capable of even imagining what they might do to me.

I saw a girl once who was also going to a secret English course. She was walking with her books hidden and her face covered by a chadary (burka) that the women were forced to wear. Suddenly her chadary caught on her foot and fell down on the ground. All her books, pens, and notebooks scattered. A car full of Taliban stopped and approached her. She quickly picked up her chadary. She tried to pick up some of her books, but she could not dare to pick up the others. She stood in shock and fright. The Taliban said to her, "What is wrong with you that you cannot control your chadary? Where are you going?" She only stood there with her chin shaking and out of breath. They saw the English books on the ground and said, "Why don't you study Koran?" She couldn't say anything. They started beating her with a cable used by religious police for those who do something against Islam or the Koran. When she recovered herself, she put on her chadary and ran home, leaving her books on the ground, colored by blood. A crowd of people was watching. The Taliban picked up her books and burned them to show the people they were against English and English books. I was close by and watching with the crowd, but I was too afraid to do anything.

After that I went to the teacher's house even more carefully and terrified, which made learning English even harder. I planned many times to stop, but I was expecting the eradication of the Taliban regime. Then the attack of September 11th occurred. Unfortunately, this

photos: Jen Marlowe



After years of studying English secretly during the Taliban, Roman now teaches English in his village.



Veteran Seeds Weda, Parnian and Mujib cheerfully help out at the reception for the new Seeds.



The original Afghan Seeds welcome the new 2003 Afghan delegation to the Seeds of Peace family. They already have their hats and shirts!



Wedda, left, is publishing her writing in an Afghan women's magazine.

horrible attack caused the death of many Americans. Fortunately, the world stood behind them and started uprooting terrorism and the Taliban across Afghanistan. One day I woke up and went toward my teacher's house. When I got a little closer to the Taliban center, I started hiding my English books as usual. I saw a crowd at the center, and when I arrived, I heard everyone saying with smiling mouths, "Taliban ran away!" I really became happy. I revealed my English books and ran to my teacher's house shouting loudly, "I am studying English!"

Adjusting to America

By Mir Akhdar (Kabul)

2002 was the first time Afghans could go to the USA and attend Seeds of Peace. Twelve students were selected from different schools in Kabul to go to the US. The first problem was that we didn't know what we would do there. We didn't have any guide or experience of camp. In New York, we were greeted by people from Manhattanville College and we were very happy to meet them, but the second problem was that our English wasn't very good. We couldn't catch anything the counselors told us and this made us very unhappy. The third problem was the food. We didn't know about American food before and it was so hard for us to get used to it. In this case some of us got unhappy and became sick because we didn't eat anything. The fourth problem was that we didn't want to talk with anyone because we were coming from a country that had been at war for 23 years. Camp was only four months after the Taliban left Kabul. We told ourselves that Americans are very violent people, but it wasn't like that. They were very kind people. When we returned home, we spoke about Americans to Afghans. They were happy to hear that American people aren't like American soldiers in Kabul. If you see soldiers and they don't know your language, it's easy to think they are violent, but Americans are not like that, they are very kind people.

The Aftermath of War

Weda Saghari (Kabul)

Years of Soviet occupation and civil wars have caused many problems for Afghans.

One of these problems is illiteracy. During 23 years of war, children and youth couldn't continue their literacy acquisition. Some of them immigrated to other countries, and some of them had economic problems. Now about 68% of the population of Afghanistan are illiterate, which is regrettable. Afghanistan and Japan got their freedom in the same year; now Japan is the most developed country in the world but Afghanistan is the most backward country. All of this is the fruit of illiteracy.

We need to remove illiteracy from our country and reconstruct schools. We can persuade our children to go to school and get an education so our young generation can make amends for the last 23 years of war.

The other problem in Afghanistan is tribalism, which has caused much bloodshed. Tribalism has resulted in destruction. As it is said in the Holy Quran, Muslims are brothers, and all Afghans are Muslims and should live like brothers. We can remove tribalism and give everyone the same rights.

We are also affected by the shortage of medical centers in most of the Afghan provinces, except Kabul. We don't have hospitals in all the provinces and villages. This is a very big problem because if a doctor has a patient s/he must bring the patient to Kabul. Sickneses are increasing day by day in our country. If we don't make active medical centers like hospitals or clinics, we will not be able to prevent diseases.

Another difficulty is refugees, such as those who have immigrated to neighboring countries like Iran and Pakistan because of war, drought, and other problems. Now they are returning to Afghanistan. They do not have shelter, jobs, food or clothes. If the government or NGOs don't take care of them, then they can die because of the freezing temperatures. The government should prepare shelter for them; the government should pave the ground for them to work and feed their families.

The problems are clear for everyone, but how should we solve these problems? It is the duty of high authorities: they should allocate money to take care of the problems so that facilities are prepared and our people are helped. God grant that these problems are solved as soon as possible.

Beyond My Dreams

Mujibullah Mashal (Kabul)

I took a drawing course even though it was prohibited by the Taliban. If they arrested anybody for this crime they would beat him with lashes. I was not afraid and I continued to draw for two years, up to the end of the Taliban government, though I didn't have any way to show my work.

In December 2002, the Afghan SOP Delegation had a meeting with AINA (Afghan Media and Culture Center), where most of the magazines and newspapers are published. After the meeting I decided I wanted to work with a kids' magazine called Parwaz. When they saw my drawings they asked me to participate in a 15 day workshop in which the drawings were for kids' magazines and books. I participated in the workshop and every day I

biked one hour to come to AINA.

I really enjoyed drawing cartoons for kids. At the end of the workshop, my teacher told me we would have an exhibition and my drawings would be exhibited. Oh, how amazing it was for me! After three years, I had a time and place to show my art to others. I was so happy; I never dreamed about this before!

I was counting minutes up to the end of the workshop. One day before the exhibition we all came to AINA to organize the hall and hang the drawings. When I counted my own drawings, there were 15. Invitation cards were given all my relatives and friends.

At night I didn't sleep well and I was thinking about the exhibition. The next day (28th December), 200 guests were present for the first day of the exhibition, which continued for another week. I was so happy I felt bigger than my clothes, and I thanked God for creating art.



"I was not afraid and I continued to draw under the Taliban."



Conversation With Another Generation

Rahil Kacheria (Mumbai)

The other day I was talking with a friend of my grandfather's who lives in Delhi. He was telling me about the freedom struggle and how political efforts to hide information led to a lot of rumors and poor knowledge of the situation during Partition.

He was living in Amritsar at that time. Trains used to come across borders filled with people eager to reach the country of residence they had chosen once Partition was announced. They had seen trains full of blood, dead bodies and various body parts scattered all over the place. He was sixteen years old. On one night, he and his friends joined a huge mob and went to the station with knives in their hands. They were stopped by the police, who asked them as to where they were going. Proudly they replied "gadi kaatne," which literally means, "to cut the train."

The police smiled and let them go. Then the mob spent four hours brutally cutting people who were aspiring to leave India for Pakistan.

I was shocked, and when I asked him the justification of this barbaric act, he replied that it was revenge. That night he had killed innumerable

people and injured many others. He came back with only a few injuries and was cheered on by the villagers when they learned of this. He recited this story in a very proud manner and said he didn't consider himself a murderer as he was just taking revenge. He then went on to tell me that to this day he considers this one of the greatest achievements of his life.

At the end of this long conversation I wondered that if this was the mentality of the people during Partition, then surely it was not as devastating as it had the potential to be.

It is pleasing now that the number of people who think this way has been reduced. But what scares me the most is that the few people who still harbor such thoughts occupy some of the most important positions in the Indian administration. In 1947, the weapons used were mainly rifles and knives, but if such a situation arises again then it's not going to be knives or guns but a whole different scenario, one whose magnitude would be unimaginable.



Ties *that* Bind

Formerly one country, India and Pakistan have spent 50 years engaged in a bitter conflict. Indian and Pakistani Seeds remind us of the culture that unites them.

Common Customs

Aneeta Nagi (Lahore),
Shyam Kapadia (Mumbai)

In pre-Partition days, India and Pakistan were one land. It was one big country that bled for many years and which eventually broke into two pieces. We have fought four wars, but we still see that there are customs and traditions that are common to the entire population.

In the beginning of the year comes the *basant tehvar*, or the kite-flying festival, that came to Pakistan from India and from the Sikhs. Both nations celebrate this festival with fervor. Here we are united.

The most common shared tradition is the dowry system. It is customary in both countries for the girl's family to give a dowry to the husband's household. When weddings take place, both Hindus and Muslims celebrate *mehndi*, another Hindu custom that has crept into Muslim culture. This is an entire day devoted to music and dance before a wedding. The wedding day has its own eccentricities. It is

"With the same language, customs and celebrations, it is hard to believe that we still don't accept that we all belong to one land — which is reality."

bound upon the girl to cry at her wedding, even if she doesn't want to, because she is leaving her house to live with her husband, and must be feeling sad! So on all weddings we have the usual crying bride. Here we are united.

It is quite a surprise that the English, the inventors of cricket who introduced us to the sport during their reign, have never won a world cup! But we, the two proud nations, have achieved this feat. Another thing that inevitably binds us together is our language. Indians call it Hindi, Pakistanis call it Urdu, but the roots are the same. With the same language, customs and celebrations, it is hard to believe that we still don't accept that we all belong to one land — which is reality.

Indian and Pakistani food varies from region to region, but it is amazing to see how much we have in common. Tandoori chicken is savored by both nations. Many Indians are vegetarians,

so we modify the food. Mutton Biryani becomes Vegetable Biryani, Seekh Kebab becomes Harabhara Kebab. Sweets like Gulab Jamuns, Rasgollas, and Kheer are well known everywhere.

An old adage says a way to a man's heart is through his stomach. If that is true it seems that if we have so much food in common, we probably have the same heart. Even though our countries are divided and at each other's throats 99% of the time, no amount of religious or political jingoism can change the fact that culturally we are the same people!

The Lahore Groove

Fareed Yaldram (Lahore)

Lahoris do not eat to live. They eat to share, to love, to enjoy, to celebrate. Eating together is an old tradition. Lahore, Pakistan is rich in culture, heritage and good cooks.

There is nothing in the world which can beat a glass of Lassi, and Nan and Parathas (types of bread) make life worth living. Lahore taught the world to seekh kebab. From barbeque to *mithaees* (desserts), it's got everything for food lovers.

The most essential ingredients are the spices. If it's not spicy it's not good. Most of the dishes are rich in fats so if you want to gain a couple of pounds its not a bad place to start.

Certainly there is a lot more to Lahore, but its food cannot be ignored. Any Indian or Pakistani food lover should come to Lahore and live it up!

Harmony

Amal Khan (Lahore)

Hidden within the strings of the sitar and the thump of the tabla lies an entire sub-continental culture. Shrouded between seams of notes and the rhythms of the Sufis, lies a past, a memory and an identity. South Asia has witnessed more violence and unrest than is sane. Its people have been caught in an orbit of injustice and hate. Its leaders, never worthy of commanding countries, raped their people of what was promised to them.

It is time we reject the differences we have created to appreciate the similarities we were born with. One border, one checkpoint, cannot destroy years of unity. When I talk of similarities I talk not of skintones and creeds, nor perspectives and viewpoints. All are governed by differences, and fueled by misconceived passions. When I speak, I speak of what we all possess in our midst, something brushed aside for being less paramount in today's globalized world, but which makes us a little more human and a little less indifferent.

India and Pakistan are revered for music. This form of expression has withstood the test of time, the bitter horrors of Partition, the terror of war, victories gained and lost. It might be tempting to dismiss the thought on the basis of sheer practicality, but the instrument and the human voice, especially here, are weapons against violence. Music breeds harmony and unity. Its memories trigger emotional voyages to what once was and what can still be. I believe the link between chords, the ethnicity of rugged fingers brushing against taut strings, have more impact than any amount of diplomacy.

When bare heels stamp into raw, dry dust in rhythm to the beat of the *dhol*, when the head sways in the fever of obsession, the power created has the potential to soothe visions tainted with black bias. When the Hindi voice sings the *saa-rai-ga-pa-ha-da-nee-sa*, when vocals are breathed into the air, the mind's capacity to think of differences is lost. A sensation is born that rejects doubt. If given more recognition than is given at present, this might be the answer to good diplomatic relations.

To speak of the amalgamation of Indo-Pak music is not easy, solely because both are fingers of the same hand — the hand that strums harmony on the chords of a sitar, or brushes across the face of a wooden tabla to create something no less than magic.

Recently, two musical artists, Sukhbir from India and Shehzad Roy from Pakistan, got together to sing a duet that was played almost constantly on the radio. It was a song about love, and it was appreciated beyond belief. I applaud the genius who thought of this. Within such gestures lies the capacity and the potential to breach barriers of war and history.



I understand that in order to think realistically, you must acknowledge the world you dwell in. Therefore I don't claim that music is the one link to bridge regional diversity. However, the fact remains that through this medium of expression, an existence is created. An existence that both our people share and hold precious. Why not "exploit" that creation? Why not allow it to be one of the solutions? Why not touch hearts and souls with music instead of destroying relationships with political speeches that shake the very foundations of stability?

When I embrace the presence of alternatives, I become human. And as a human, I make a journey called life. I am at a point in the journey where I see two roads. One spells political practicality, and the other is longer, riskier and untraveled, but its distance is so much sweeter and its passion is so much my own.

The Universal Language

Radhika Lalla (Mumbai)

Music has a unique power. A verse, a haunting tune can do so much more than a thousand political speeches. The simplest of messages, the purest of emotions expressed. Not in the language of the Indians or the language of the Pakistanis but in the universal language of harmonies and melodies. Music unites. It brings together millions of people, not caring about any of the categories we are so conscious of. All it yearns for is to be heard.

Indian and Pakistani cultures are closely interrelated. So many of the facets, the dimensions, of one culture are reflected in the other, despite each having their own vivid personality. Yet the people of one nation are not able to enjoy and learn from the arts and beauties of the other. Legacies have been broken; art forms are the casualties of this war for supremacy.

Music is deeply rooted in Indian culture and there is a rich and wonderful tapestry of styles and genres to be found here. From the classical renditions on timeless instruments like the sitar, tabla or sarangi, to rock and pop music, it is all appreciated.

The Indian film industry generates a vast majority of the music that is heard by a major section of the population. It is one aspect of our culture that cannot be held back. Indian film

music is vastly popular with people all over Pakistan and the films produced in "Bollywood," the Indian film industry, are loved across the border as well. Likewise artists from Pakistan like Mehdi Hassan and the band Junoon are well received and their music loved by people in India, not because it is composed or written by people born in a certain country, but because it is good music.

These are just examples that illustrate the power of music. They show some of what is achieved by sharing emotions and thoughts. These are factors that every person can relate to. Every person feels the same basic emotions; every person goes through conflicts in thought and action. Music is merely an expression of these emotions, of these daily conflicts. Nothing expressed in this form is restricted to only one person; it relates to everyone, to the purest part of us, not the part that has been so brutally divided into classes and sub-classes in a supposed effort to better life for all. Music can touch a life in such a way as to change that life forever. It can uplift our spirits or sadden the happiest among us. It brings alive the strongest emotions: love, happiness and pleasure, as well as anger, hatred and despair.

Music also reflects the mindset and the views of people. It tells the story that many may wish to tell but don't know how. It has always been used as a messenger and storyteller, describing the life of the common man, his aspirations and dreams. It moves people with a message they may not want to listen to in any other form. It can tell of a reality other than the one they know. Music revolutionizes. It has the power to captivate people, to slap them in the face.

More than anything, music is an expression of thought and feeling. Different people listen to different types of music. Everyone needs someone to relate to. You may relate better to a rock band than to the musicians your mother would like you to listen to. It isn't something you can decide rationally; you can't say you don't like the music made in Pakistan because you are Indian and you're not supposed to like it. It's an art form; you either like what you hear or you don't. That, I believe, is one of the most beautiful aspects of music.



Cyprus Still Divided

On March 10, 2003, Turkish Cypriot leader Rauf Denktash and Greek Cypriot leader Tassos Papadopoulos failed to reach an agreement to unify the divided island of Cyprus. Following the breakdown of negotiations, Seeds are disappointed but determined to continue the struggle for peace.

Lighting a Fire for Peace

Suleyman Gelener (Yenikent)

Peace Fires were started by Turkish Cypriots in order to warm all Cypriots with the heat of peace. These fires were lit in many villages after magnificent pro-peace meetings took place in north Cyprus. The aim was to show that the Turkish Cypriot people want "Solution, Peace and the European Union." I believe these Peace Fires encouraged people to work together and made them realize that they have a common goal.

I attended some of the Peace Fires and I saw unity, struggle and solidarity there. Every single person was working for it. Men were collecting firewood and setting up the place. Women were baking cakes, cookies, pastries and food that is special for Cypriots. The government caused some problems in Akincilar-Lurucina by barricading the roads and not letting people pass to attend the meeting, and by stealing firewood in Gonyeli. But in spite of the difficulties, Turkish Cypriot people did not fail to light the Peace Fires. It was amazing to be at the fires, looking into the eyes of great people who stand up against the present regime and shout for peace in the rain and cold.

The whole world heard our voice except our leader Mr. Denktash and his followers. On March 10th there were negotiations about a referendum to the peace plan and Mr. Denktash, who has never accepted anything, again said "No!" and faced Turkish Cypriots with a dangerous situation. His answer will drag both Turkish Cypriots and Turkey into a bitter economic and political situation.

Anatomy of a Lost Opportunity

Tanyel Cemal (Famagusta)

Another plan to unify Cyprus has failed. The United Nations' and European Union's efforts, encouragement from countries with interests in Cyprus, and most importantly, the voice of the people of Cyprus went unheard. Both leaders claimed they needed more time.

Briefly, here are some of the important issues addressed in the failed plan: 1) A weak central state to be made up of two component states. For the Greek Cypriots, it is essential to be represented as "one" in the international community, whereas on the Turkish Cypriot side, self-government and equal status (as opposed to minority status) is fundamental. 2) A six-member presidential council proportional to the population of the two states, with a 10-month rotating presidency. Greek Cypriots want the population difference to be considered (there are around 800,000 people in the south and 200,000 in the north), while Turkish Cypriots don't want the past to be repeated and demand presidential position. 3) Some Turkish Cypriot land would be given up to the Greek side. 4) Demilitarization would take place with equal but small numbers of Greek and Turkish military forces allowed on the island.

For the first time in recent history, the Turkish Cypriot community is fearlessly expressing its desire for peace, demonstrating in the streets by the thousands. The frustration in the internationally isolated North has reached its peak. The economic situation is getting worse day by day, and the younger generation is leaving with dreams for a better future in foreign countries.

Despite the disappointment of the results, it seems the Turkish Cypriot community will not give up the struggle since that's all we have left. The support of officials is vital in solving such conflicts, but I am with the people, joining them in their voice and supporting the struggle. Disappointments during the peace process frustrate me, but will empower me to work even more for peace.

Roots of the Problem

Nikolas Papamichael (Nicosia)

Serious developments this year in the political scenery of Turkey, Greece and Cyprus, and made reunification of the divided island seem possible. Unfortunately, since this was not realized, another chance at solving Cyprus' political problem has been missed.

Cyprus' problem began in 1830, when Greece was recognized and its borders defined. The islands around Greece joined the nation, but Cyprus remained under Ottoman rule. In 1878 Turkey gave Cyprus to Britain in exchange for their support in an impending Russian-Turkish war.

During British rule Greek Cypriots hoped to unify with Greece while Turkish Cypriots were for separation by "Taxim" (Partition). After the Greek Cypriot Revolution (1955-59) against the British, an independent Cypriot state was created, and the two communities came to terrible disputes. In the meantime, a junta took over the Greek government and there was a coup in Cyprus. This paved the way for Turkey's 1974 military operation in Cyprus, which is seen by the Greek Cypriots as an invasion and by the Turkish Cypriots as a peace operation. The two communities see this history from different perspectives.

Since then there have been many developments and initiatives to promote a solution. The most recent, supported by Kofi Annan, called for a united Cyprus to enter the European Union. The president of the Republic of Cyprus, Tassos Papadopoulos, accepted the proposal with several minor conditions, while Turkish leader Raouf Denktash denied the plan's credibility.

We should criticize the intransigent position of Mr. Denktash, but we must not become attached to blaming our leaders because it will only lead to greater separation. After the 10th of March many political figures stated that this was the last chance and that the situation will never change. This is a terrible mistake. The Cypriot community must continue believing in coexistence until this beautiful sun-bathed island in the East Mediterranean becomes the embodiment of peace.

Failure Maintains Status Quo

Nefeli Tsiouti (Nicosia)

Turkish Cypriot leader Rauf Denktash did not agree to the Cyprus unification plan because he believes the plan forced the Turkish side to give up more land than it should. Some of the Turkish Cypriots feel this way too, but most of them wanted unification; they have showed that in hundreds of demonstrations already. Most Greek Cypriots favored the plan because it would have meant recovering homes lost in 1974, not because they wanted to live with Turkish Cypriots. My father has a house in Famagusta, in the Turkish part of the island. If the plan had passed, my father might have gotten his home back.

I had mixed feelings about the plan. If the plan had been accepted, Turkish and Greek Cypriots would have been living in cities together. I was a little afraid of that because I know it would have been difficult to live with the Turkish Cypriots. They made us feel they hated us for so many years. I heard there are many criminals on "the other side." My parents told me if we did unite with them they wouldn't let me out with my friends late at night because there would be more strangers. In a way I'm happy the talks failed, because now nothing is going to change, and we won't have to be afraid. But in a way I'm sorry, because I was preparing myself to eventually learn to live together.

My Turkish friends are really upset about the plan's failure. Unification would have meant economic development for the Turkish side, so it would have been good for them. They are at a disadvantage. For us, nothing changes because our part of the island is richer than the Turkish-controlled North.

EU Membership in Jeopardy

Resat Saban (Guzelyurt)

After the failure at The Hague, United Nations' Secretary General Kofi Annan said the UN would no longer spend any time on the Cyprus



Victoria Kleanthous with other Seeds at the Cyprus Day of Peace festival in Pergamos Park in the buffer zone (photo courtesy of Victoria Kleanthous)



issue. The European Union Commission declared that the internationally recognized Greek-Cypriot government would sign the EU Accession Treaty on April 16 in Athens, at the same time warning Turkey that occupation of the northern part of Cyprus and the non-recognition of the legal Cypriot government would affect Turkey's accession negotiations.

Even though the Cyprus problem is not solved, the Commission will accept the Greek Cypriot side into the EU, but if it enters without northern Cyprus, there will be more problems. Turkish Cypriots can't sell products to the world because the Republic of Cyprus is the only recognized government of the island. Turkish Cypriots feel very strongly about membership in the European Union. They have started to participate in marches to show the government that "We want a solution in Cyprus." In the last march there were 70,000 Turkish Cypriots in the center of Nicosia (1/3 of the entire Turkish Cypriot population). When you ask any Turkish Cypriot you can easily understand that they want peace, because they see their future in the solution to the conflict.

Kofi Annan does not believe that the two sides of Cyprus will be able to make any substantial changes to his peace plan, but I think the doors are not fully closed. We still have time to make the treaty more agreeable for both communities. If not, all Cypriots are going to lose a unique chance for peace in Cyprus.

Regret and Resolve

Victoria Kleanthous (Nicosia)

On the 11th of March we all expected to hear a big "Yes" from both Turkish and Greek Cypriot leaders. To our surprise and dissatisfaction the "Yes for Peace" was only heard from the President of Cyprus, Mr. Tassos Papadopoulos. Not that we expected Rauf Denktash (leader of Turkish Cyprus) to respect the demands of his fellow Turkish-Cypriots; his dream was always for Cyprus to become two separate states, one for Turkish Cypriots and the other for Greek Cypriots. Even so, we expected Denktash to be under pressure from Turkish mainland leaders who are interested in joining the EU in the near future. It will be difficult for them to join while still occupying 40% of Cyprus.

After years of trying to find a peaceful solution to the Cyprus problem this was the only time we came a breath's distance away. We feel cheated. Why does the world allow one man to dictate not only to his own people but also to the United Nations?

After the time I spent at Seeds of Peace talking with Turkish Cypriots, I came back to Cyprus feeling optimistic and hopeful for our future together. Now I feel anger and disappointment at the outcome of these talks, but I will not give up my dream of a peaceful, united Cyprus. We have the right to live together in peace, so the world, and especially the leaders, must hear our voices. The demonstrations, talks and meetings between Greek and Turkish Cypriots will continue until someone takes notice.

Maine Seeds: Diversity in Action

Maine Seeds put the skills of coexistence to work inside their American communities, which are experiencing rapid demographic changes

No Longer Just a Vacation Land

Adrienne Yoe (Yarmouth)

One of my favorite memories is coming home in third grade, running through the door after my first day of classes and saying, "Mom, you won't believe it! There are NO black or Jewish kids in my entire grade." When I said this, we had lived in Maine for barely a week, after moving from downtown Atlanta where I attended a school bustling with diversity. Being in an all-white and Christian school shocked me.

When the census came out in 2000, it was found that Maine was the whitest state in the country. In the six years I have been living here I have seen enormous changes in the state's ethnic make-up. African immigrants have come to Portland and Lewiston, the biggest cities in Maine, in search of a better life. They come from Sudan, Somalia, and Togo and practice both Islam and Christianity. These new neighbors have added a lot to our community, though whites and blacks have faced many challenges.

The first "immigrants" to Maine were Protestant settlers whose takeover of Maine from Native Americans provoked violence and resentment, and left Native Americans with less land and meager economic opportunities. The next wave of immigrants was Roman Catholics of French-Canadian and Irish backgrounds. When they came in the mid-19th century some Protestants felt threatened by their presence to the point that hostilities broke out and a Catholic Church was burned in Portland. When African immigrants came to Maine, they faced the same kind of hostilities based on misunderstanding and fear, as did previous immigrants.

I have a lot of sympathy for immigrants; When my great-grandparents came to America from Ireland they saw signs hanging on business doors saying, "Hiring. No need for Irish to apply." Many immigrants who have come to the United States have had a difficult time but eventually are welcomed into our melting pot.

Most recently in the fall of 2002, Somalis from

Atlanta announced that fourteen new families would be resettling in Lewiston. Some members of the white community didn't understand Somali beliefs and culture, and what they can add to the community. Once the new families moved in, hostilities arose because people felt insecure about how Lewiston would deal with the financial and educational demands of resettling Somalis. Harsh words and violence were passed between whites and Somalis who simply didn't understand each other.

In January, Mainers stood behind the growing diversity in our state with a rally in support of diversity and in opposition to a white Christian supremacy conference being held in Lewiston. These new Mainers became a part of my life when I joined Seeds of Peace. At a Seeds of Peace meeting in the fall I met Naima Margan, a Seed from Portland, who came to the states from Somalia when she was eight. I asked for her opinion of the situation. Without Naima explaining her view of the Somali situation to



Adrienne Yoe and Coach Carlos at Camp

me, one that is so rarely seen in the media, I would never have the understanding that I have now of the situation in Lewiston and what wonderful changes Somalis are already adding to our state. Sometimes, getting new neighbors who are different can be a little scary, but I am confident that Mainers will fully embrace these wonderful, new neighbors who clearly have so much to add. Meeting Naima was one of the best things that could have happened to me. She was the first Somali immigrant I had ever met and made me aware of the challenges Somali immigrants face in Maine. I appreciate their

challenges and resilience, and understand my role as a Mainer in unifying this state with diversity. It has been said that it only takes one person to begin making changes; finally I've realized just how true that is.

Spreading the Winds of Change

*Adrienne Yoe (Yarmouth),
Rachell Culley (Paris, Maine)*

As Seeds of Peace graduates around the world struggle to continue the work they began at camp, the Maine Seeds work for peace and coexistence in our state throughout the year.

In the past months the Maine Seeds gave presentations, speeches and workshops around the state. We have biweekly meetings and continue to work within our schools, communities, and homes for better relations and increased understanding between religious and ethnic groups throughout our state. Other activities range from cleaning up camp to meeting with former Governor Angus King to discussing issues of racism and diversity in Maine's educational system. In the meeting, Lars Okot, Sam Peisner and Sarah Pelletier spoke eloquently with the former Governor about their efforts to bring tolerance and understanding to troubled communities. At the press conference following, we were invited to meet with the President of the Senate and the

Speaker of the House of Representatives for Maine. Maine Seeds also attended the inauguration of Governor John Baldacci and served as ushers at his inaugural ball. At the recent Seeds of Peace dinner in Portland, we presented a number of community leaders with awards for their support of Seeds of Peace. Seeds of Peace President Aaron Miller and Governor Baldacci spoke about the power of Seeds, and the deepest thanks were extended to Tim Wilson for his unflinching commitment to the Maine Seeds project and his endless efforts for peace and coexistence in Maine.

Maine Seeds will be active this spring, continuing their work in the community with a mediation seminar, a three-day retreat at camp to help educate state leaders about youth-issues from youth perspectives and volunteering and running in a road race called Beach to Beacon whose proceeds will be donated to Seeds of Peace. Our experience at Seeds of Peace is reflected in the numerous presentations, workshops and articles we produce; an expanded view of the world, an open mind and heart, and a commitment to becoming the wind of change in our schools, communities and state.

Poems

Negative Man

As I sit by my window, I wonder

Snow is accumulating on the frozen tundra and the air has a biting chill to it so negative man might show

Negative man has a harsh affect on all

Some adore negative man, using words like "no", "bad" and "impossible" so regularly, they loose their meaning

Negative man has a permanent hold on our consciousness

Negative man enters every situation, but does not fix it

Negative man comes, feeding like a parasite off fallen idealism

Idealism, the hope for a better world just because we existed, usually dies when negative man shows up

When negative man overwhelms idealism and it is forced upon us "Deal with reality.... You can do nothing, so do not try to do anything"

Negative man can make people act irrationally in so many situations and proves human kind is the worst creature yet to see this world

The only creature which will eventually destroy its habitat

Negative man shows the fatal flaw in humans

We want to be led like sheep

We disregard fundamental principles set by thousands of years of our ancestors

We separate ourselves into races, into cultures, into sub-cultures, into clans, into inane categories by which we are forced to govern ourselves.

When we are completely polarized from each other, Negative man leads us to fear

This fear without doubt, leads to murder, whether it is of the senseless kind in war or the individual one we see everyday, or the loss of independent thought

This power he wields is nothing

compared to the love

Is this vague concept the desire to conjugate with another?

Is it the overwhelming feeling of trust we feel towards so few?

Or, is it be a basic respect for all humans, whether it is the man poor, rich, or between those branches?

That is what I am praying for

In this world of societies deciding who shall be helped and who will not be by some arbitrary standard, I think it can be boiled down to a simple phrase

Do unto others, as you want done unto you

Simple enough

When you are homeless, jobless, and possibly have a mental disability, will you want to be spat upon, kicked to the curb and ignored, as if you are a piece of meat?

When you are a citizen of a country that could be bombed or invaded, for whatever reason, will you want your life to be torn to nothing or perhaps be ended all for the sake of political gains?

Now, is this divine love concept I speak of an obligation?

In the true meaning of the word, Love is an obligation, if one wants to receive its warmness back. But it is still a choice whether to love, just as it is a choice to be overrun by negative man

As a human, we all feel this compassion sometimes. Just not enough. We should be able to empathize with the drug addict or the beggar, or just the weak man who feels no purpose in his life, for most of us are not too far from being like these people

It is love that defeats negative man

As I sit by my window, I wonder

It is love that defeats negative man

As I sit by my window, I wonder.

by Tommi MacMillan (Portland)

In the Shadows of War

Little children growing in the shadows of war
Not responsible for things done before
For the wars that have no end
On the battle for the land
For the false agreements signed
For the soldiers left behind

They see their mothers crying
They see their brothers dying
Their thought to hate the other
The one who killed their father

Oh those children cry themselves to sleep at night
Knowing that their sisters fight
Knowing the uncertainty of tomorrow
Feeling burning feelings of pain and sorrow
Trying to find the one to blame all of it on
But they can't, cause that man is long gone

They see their mothers crying
They see their brothers dying
Their thought to hate the other
The one who killed their father

What can we say to them?
How can we take away the pain?
When our hatred is so strong
For the people with whom we can't get along...
So how can we explain?
That a lion can sleep next to a lamb.

Alina Shkolnikov (Jerusalem)



Nada Dajani (see back cover art and poetry) and Alina Shkolnikov

Mourning my Friend

By Adar Ziegel (Haifa)

Unbroken Spirits

An Israeli and a Palestinian Seed confront the worst of the conflict by building alternatives to revenge.

I had just finished school. I came to my house to put away all the balloons that I got for my sixteenth birthday. My friends walked with me and had to hurry out so they wouldn't miss the bus. They called to tell me that they caught the bus on time, and to wish me a happy birthday once more. They told me that they were on bus number7; I couldn't hear the first number, but it hardly seemed important.

A few minutes later I heard a boom that shook the floor, but I didn't know what it was. I didn't even think of a bombing; that kind of thing hasn't happened for almost a year in Haifa, which is known as the city of coexistence between Arabs and Jews. And on my birthday?

A little later, my friend Yael called asking if I'm OK. At first I didn't know what she wanted from me. She filled me in on what happened; there was a terror attack on Moria street, on the 37 bus, a lot of injured and dead. Where? I asked. Near Carmelia, she answered. We stopped talking.

Carmelia is a neighborhood in which many of my friends live. I started crying. I didn't know where they were, and I couldn't reach anyone because all the cellphone lines were busy as they always are after a bombing. I was just with my friends, we sang and ate cake and we were so happy, laughing all the time. Now, just an hour later, I didn't know who was dead and who was alive. I couldn't stop crying. I tried calling them over and over but there was no answer. I saw on TV so many pictures of the remains of the destroyed bus, and interviews with eyewitnesses who explained what happened, but I didn't care. I knew what happened, I just wanted to know if everybody I know is OK.

The number of the people that died kept going up, rising to seventeen. I couldn't stop crying as the chances that something had happened to someone I knew got bigger by the minute.

Two hours later, I finally reached one of my friends! I was filled with joy just to hear her voice. She told me that she and my friends were on the bus that left right before the bus that blew up, and that they saw the explosion. She sounded so sad but still tried to cheer me up. The sadness in her voice just made it worse. I stopped crying but the shock that something like that could have happened to her or anyone else wouldn't leave me. I kept thinking what if...

In the evening, my friends and I called all of our friends to try and locate everyone. I took out our school yearbook to look for everyone's faces as we called. As the evening passed, we began to notice one person was missing. We started to call the hospitals, to see if perhaps he was among the wounded being treated, but he wasn't listed anywhere.

I didn't sleep that night. I first heard them announce his name on the

morning news. They just said he was dead, just like that, like it was unimportant, and suddenly he was gone.

Seventeen flowers were picked before their time that day. One of those wonderful flowers was my friend, Tom Hershko. Tom and his father had just returned from a day of fun in Netanya. Tom was always an optimistic person. His smile was always stuck to his face like someone super-glued it there. You couldn't be sad when you were next to Tom. Tom was a good friend, the best kind you can ask for, always offering a helping hand, always making things better, always there. Now Tom is gone, and no one can make it right or better. I am left with memories of an amazing person and an amazing friend.

I stood there wondering why did Tom die? Did it help either side? The answer is no. It didn't help one bit. The killing keeps on going, from both sides. Both sides are to blame for his death. I don't hate anyone, not even the bomber, because of it. I just want to scream STOP! Stop the killing, the misunderstanding and start co-existing, start understanding, start compromising, start living! Because if we continue like this then we will simply get to the point that no one is left here in this cursed piece of land. The land was meant for people to live on, and the piece of territory is worth nothing without life.

In the wake of Tom's death, I am glad I had somewhere to turn. Many Israelis, Arabs, and Seeds from all over the world wrote to me and called me after they heard about the bombing. They really made me feel that I am part of a family where you are accepted for who



Adar Ziegel (on left) with friend Tom Hershko of blessed memory.

I went to the site of the bombing to say goodbye to someone who was very important to me and I came to the Seeds Center to say hello to people who are very important to me.

you are and not what you are.

Only a few days after the attack, I came to the Seeds of Peace Center in Jerusalem for a meeting with a group of Israeli and Palestinian Seeds. Everyone was so surprised that I came. They asked me if it was a hard decision to come. I was shocked by the question. There is nothing that seemed more natural to me than coming to the Center that day. It was just as natural for me to go to the place of the bombing the day it happened. I went there to say goodbye to someone very important to me and I came to the Center to say hello to people that are very important to me.

The bombing made me 100% sure that what we are doing in Seeds of Peace is not just a way, it's the only way we have in this crazy world to live and survive. We MUST co-exist with our neighbors. It is the only way to peace, the only way if we want to keep on living. I love my country and I won't give it up, but as in a marriage, you must compromise, give some and take some to live in peace.

All day long people come to me and try to give me ways to deal with death. I know how to deal with death. What I don't know how to deal with is pointless murder. The only thing that will take my pain away is when the killing and hurting will stop, when the message of Seeds will grow, when people will co-exist here, when there will be peace.

Human Rights Work: A Path to Peace

Badawi Qawasmī (Ramallah)

I have survived the last 30 months the same way as any other Palestinian. I have known friends who were killed, many who are in prison, and thousands of families forced into poverty and misery. I wanted to do as much as I could to bring a change, at least for people I knew who needed help.

I am working now as a field coordinator at an Israeli human rights organization called the Public Committee Against Torture in Israel. PCATI works with Israeli and Palestinian prisoners and detainees in Israeli prisons. Our work is mainly with Palestinian security prisoners. In interrogation rooms, they are often subject to abuse and torture. Recently, the practice of torture was banned by a decision of the Israeli Supreme Court. Unfortunately, since the intifada started, the court has not done much to enforce the law.

PCATI monitors the implementation of human rights law according to international conventions. The work has expanded due to the intifada, and right now we are dealing with the ill-treatment of detainees, mass arrests of civilians, and bad conditions within prisons and detention centers. One of our most important goals is to spread awareness among the Israeli community about torture in prisons and the dangers of using such tactics against Palestinian prisoners. Those who torture "enemies" may easily employ it as well on their own citizens. My Israeli colleagues feel they are contributing to the efforts to create understanding between the two nations, by sending the message to Palestinians that there are Israelis who know about their conditions and are trying to do something about it.

I have dealt with a number of painful cases. One involved a man who left the West Bank in 1982 and married a Palestinian woman in Jordan. Israel confiscated his ID because of his wife's Jordanian citizenship, even though they returned to live in a refugee camp outside Ramallah. During the intifada, he was arrested and has been kept in a military camp for nine months, because he has no ID. The Israelis want to deport him to Jordan, and he wants to stay in the West Bank where he lives. I have developed personal contacts with his family, and I feel responsible for him. I want our organization to take on his case and follow it to the end.

We have a case of a man in Nablus who was tied to a jeep in order to serve as a human shield from stones and shots. Israeli soldiers then beat him and left him in the street. The witnesses described the soldier who was most violent. Two weeks later, I received a report from the same neighborhood in Nablus, from a youth who was beaten and then thrown into a garbage can. The youth gave a nearly identical description of the soldier who attacked him.

We have heard accounts of what happens during arrests and in prisons. Many are shot or cut on their hands or legs by handcuffs, and then placed in prison in inhumane conditions with no protection from weather, little food, and no medical care. People with medical conditions receive painkillers at best. We had a case in which a man died because he had asthma and was put in a humid cell and given no medication.

Sometimes you want to have a job that does not remind you of the horrors of your reality. But at the same time, if everyone is always trying to escape it, we will live in it forever without changing anything. We cannot get people out of prison, but we can help families and prisoners get better treatment. Every time I get a phone call from the mother of a prisoner, saying thank you, my son, I feel that I offered some relief to her in her distress, and she feels the security of knowing other people are concerned.

Another positive outcome of my work is cooperation with Israelis. These people inspire me on many occasions. Even when I had wonderful experiences in Seeds of Peace, I often questioned the effectiveness of what I was doing, because maybe our worlds were just too far apart. My colleagues make me believe again that the two nations can trust each other without compromising too much of what we believe in.

Many people think human rights work is useless in countering the world's injustices. I think failure is just as important as success in the work of human rights, as in any kind of work; failures are just examples to learn from on the way to success. The great success I am hoping for is not just to react to specific cases, but to influence changes in Israeli law.

Changes are never made by the majority. People complain that the peace camp in Israel or Palestine is a minority, but change begins from a small, committed group of people. Eventually they move the majority. John Wallach was one person with an idea, and now his idea is an organization that affects thousands of people.

As a result of my involvement with Seeds of Peace, it was easier for me as a Palestinian to go and work with other Israelis. I know that not everyone from one society is responsible for what his army or government does, because there are people who disagree and they should not be treated or thought of the same way as the perpetrators of abuses.

We say that peace can be signed between leaders on paper, but real peace has to be between people: that is why the agreements signed at Oslo collapsed in front of our eyes. We feel the change is going to have to come from Israeli society. My personal feeling is that the Israelis have the power to change the reality by withdrawing their army and changing their

treatment of the millions of Palestinians living under their control. That is why I have never stopped talking to Israelis, because I think that it is essential for them to advance peace by changing their society.

My message to Israelis is that you have a role to play in your community, the same as I have in mine. As soldiers, Israelis can make a difficult choice and refuse to serve in occupied areas. That will strengthen Palestinian Seeds' ability to promote peace in our community. While I respect the obligation to defend your country, there are many ways to do it besides serving at a checkpoint or a settlement. I hope you know that we Palestinian Seeds are still the voices carrying hopes of peace among our

friends and families.

I encourage all Seeds to join me and spread awareness about the human rights of the other side. Human rights are the path to peace, because they protect us all. The enforcement of human rights would end the targeting of civilians and the worst suffering of both sides. As a Seed for nearly ten years, I know that with hard work by both Israelis and Palestinians, we can eventually accomplish our shared goal.

Sometimes you want to have a job that does not remind you of the horrors of your reality. But if everyone is always trying to escape it, we will live in it forever without changing anything.

My Israeli colleagues are sending the message to Palestinians that there are Israelis who know about their conditions and are trying to do something about it.



Badawi Qawasmī



Our eyes lost between eyes
We are the center of the future
Weather the pain of the past
Not with an elusive fall dream but a mission
We who have defied faith
We who could not cast kissing
The flaming crimson lips of love
We who are alive from destruction
Scanned and cried to be healed
We who chose the unexpected
We... a hushed part of you.

Our hearts, a planted seed
We who plant seeds
We who scatter out pollen
Seeding a seed to be conceived
Without water we grow
Defying rules of nature.
Aim: Ruling the black seas
With candles burning short
Longing to light you
Evolving a vivid light
Herding our waking
In this freezing globe.

Approach our light and let us
Melt this layer of ice
Gather this layer of silence
Sealing your lips and mouth.
So open your heart
And let us plant a seed deep inside
And it shall, without water, grow
Covering your spirit with its green
And your jaded soul with its promise.

We Who Plant Seeds

by: Nada Dajani

Nada Dajani
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