

THE OLIVE BRANCH

Youth Magazine of Seeds of Peace Program | Volume VIII Issue I | Winter 2004



Promising Vision



Summer @ the Center: Israeli & Palestinian Seeds Together in Jerusalem
Breaking News, Making Headlines: Media Conference in New York City
Historic Homestay: Pakistani Seeds Welcome Indian Friends
Cypriot Seeds Line Up to Cross the Green Line
President in Prishtina: Bill Clinton Meets Balkan Seeds
The Separation Fence: Security or Suffering?

The Olive Branch

WINTER 2004 VOLUME 8 Issue 1

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

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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: Israeli and Palestinian Seeds and Jerusalem Center staff visit the Mount of Olives during the Jerusalem seminar. (photo: Beth Greenbaum)

BACK COVER: Sunset over Pleasant Lake, Otisfield, Maine. (photo: Bobbie Gottschalk)

Olive Branch Brightens Up School: Letters from Teachers and Students

I never imagined that such an organization could exist. The Olive Branch drew back the curtain for me from a world that is totally different from our own.

This organization gathers seeds from different countries and plants them in one earth. I thought that my ideas, visions and points of view should be kept inside. But, here I am, speechless.

In this magazine, teenagers express themselves freely, without limits and discuss sensitive issues, without someone violently objecting. They can create a magnificent work of literature, as Nada Dajani did (in the Winter 2003 issue). I was amazed by the camp in Maine, the pictures of the Seeds, the different faces united together with satisfied smiles on their faces. They met new people and achieved the peace they were hoping for. I appreciate the person who founded this organization and the success he achieved. Best wishes for all the Seeds of Peace, the future builders.

Rasha Awad (Tamra)

I received your magazines. My students read the articles and they are thrilled to know more about your organization. They asked me to send you their thanks and regards. By the way, they liked the poem on the cover page.

Salma Osman (Tamra)

Allow me to express my admiration for your noble work. I'm fascinated by what you present in this magazine. The Olive Branch is an informative resource that teachers can use successfully. I'm a Moroccan teacher of English and would like my students to participate in similar cultural and educational programs.

Nour Eddine Laouni (Riad, Morocco)

It was great to read The Olive Branch and see the impact that the Seeds of Peace has on youth. It was especially interesting to read about reactions from family and friends that the Seeds encountered when they returned home, and how they stood up for what they had learned and believed in.

Ariella Bailey (Kibbutz Gezer)



US Secretary of State Colin Powell greets Seeds of Peace at the State Department in August 2003. Reem Yusuf (Ramallah) and Lior Bruckner (Herzlia) delivered one tie, and two powerful speeches, on behalf of the organization.

United States Congress Passes Resolution of Support for Seeds of Peace

United States Congress Resolution 288

Drafted by Representative Tom Allen of Maine

Passed on November 19, 2003

Whereas Seeds of Peace, founded by John Wallach in 1993, is a program that brings together young people from regions of conflict for coexistence and conflict resolution, primarily at its summer camp in Maine and also through its regional programs such as the Jerusalem Center for Coexistence;

Whereas Seeds of Peace works to dispel fear, mistrust, and prejudice, which are root causes of violence and conflict, and to build a new generation of leaders who seek peace;

Whereas Seeds of Peace reveals the human face of those whom youth have been taught to hate, through engaging campers in both guided coexistence sessions and ordinary summer camp activities...;

Whereas Seeds of Peace provides year-round opportunities for former participants to build on the relationships they forged at camp, so learning processes continue in the countries where they are most needed;

Whereas Seeds of Peace is strongly supported by participating governments and many world leaders...

Whereas the Arab-Israeli conflict is currently at a critical juncture, and sustained progress toward peace depends on the emergence of a new generation of leaders who will choose dialogue, friendship and openness over violence and hatred;

Whereas it is especially important to reaffirm that youth must be involved in long-term, visionary solutions to conflicts perpetuated by a cycle of violence;

Now therefore be it resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That Congress-

(1) Honors the accomplishments of Seeds of Peace in cultivating understanding, reconciliation, coexistence and peace in the Middle East and in regions of conflict around the world;

(2) Offers Seeds of Peace as a model of hope that living together in peace and security is possible.

From The Editor

It was a chilly October afternoon in Cleveland, Ohio, when Jen Marlowe, Program Director at the Seeds of Peace Center for Coexistence in Jerusalem, called to ask if I would be the new editor of The Olive Branch. There was no hesitation — I said yes.

I started at Seeds of Peace as a volunteer at the Jerusalem Center, in the fall of 2002. Having traveled throughout the Middle East, I was interested in working with youth on both sides of the conflict. I had never been to camp in Maine, never been a Seed. But when I heard what Seeds of Peace does, I wanted to help.

During the course of the last year-and-a-half, I assisted Seeds applying to college in the United States; served on the staff of the 2002 Winter Workshop at Kibbutz Yahel and the Coexistence Marathon; helped edit the Spring 2003 Olive Branch; and finally, helped plan and lead the fantastic Summer @ the Center 2003.

Through it all, I have met some of the most amazing students that I think exist on this planet. How did I know that a Palestinian from Jericho could breakdance like Michael Jackson? Or a sixteen year-old who speaks three languages fluently? I have been blessed to meet the participants at Seeds, and the staff, who work tirelessly to create programs for youth in regions of conflict.

In this issue, my first and founding editor Ned Lazarus's last, we cover Seeds of Peace activities and world events from Maine to Morocco to Mumbai, Cyprus North and South, Jerusalem East and West. The stories are truly remarkable: the largest meetings of Gazan, West Bank and Israeli Seeds since the beginning of the intifada in October 2000; Indian Seeds visiting their Pakistani counterparts in a historic homestay visit in Lahore; Cypriots from both sides of the island crossing to see with their own eyes a world they knew only from television or in pictures; Balkan Seeds coming together for workshops on their home soil; Seeds from all over the globe gathering at Seeds of Peace Camp, the Media Conference in New York, and the Thanksgiving Retreat in Connecticut. Even our parents are getting involved; Palestinian and Israeli parents of Seeds have begun a program of coexistence and dialogue.

In all these instances, Seeds of Peace youth are pioneers taking advantage of the smallest windows of opportunity - a fragile cease-fire in the Middle East, borders opening in Cyprus and the Asian Subcontinent - to see their friends from the other side, and the realities they live in. Seeds of Peace youth are not only working to open doors of communication that are closed by conflict - they are the first to walk through the gates when they finally open.

I am grateful for the opportunity to edit The Olive Branch. I want to thank Ned for all he has done in eight year of work for Seeds of Peace and The Olive Branch. Under his leadership, the magazine came into being, and grew from an eight-page newspaper to a 32-page full-color magazine. Ned traverses the country for a picture, and labors for hours to make sure the cover page truly transmits the Seeds message. I look to him as my role model for future issues. He has worked tirelessly for Seeds everywhere, and shown me what it means to be a leader, to be patient with the rhythm of the Middle East, and, most of all, has become a friend to whom I look for guidance. I hope he will always be available for Olive Branch counsel in the future.

Seth Wikas

Message from the President of Seeds of Peace, Aaron David Miller

As 2003 comes to a close, I wanted to share with all of you some end of the year reflections based on my eleven months as president of Seeds of Peace.

First and perhaps most important: Having left the world of government diplomacy after serving for almost 25 years, I am more persuaded than ever that the approach embodied by Seeds of Peace is a critical component of peace-making—whether it's the Arab-Israeli or Indian-Pakistani conflict. Negotiations, as governments pursue them, are transactional and based on calculations rooted in national and political interests. This is as it should be. But it is insufficient to achieve anything remotely resembling real peace. What Seeds of Peace does is based on transformational diplomacy: changing the perceptions and attitudes of individuals generated by personal relationships. There is no other organization capable of doing such amazing work during these critical times.

Second, Seeds is really not about grassroots training for thousands of young people. Quality is as important, if not more important, than quantity. What it *is* about is producing leaders in all aspects of society to lead and to prepare for the future. If one percent of the 2200 of you who have been through our program in the last decade emerge as real leaders, the contours of the Arab-Israeli conflict could be permanently altered for the better.

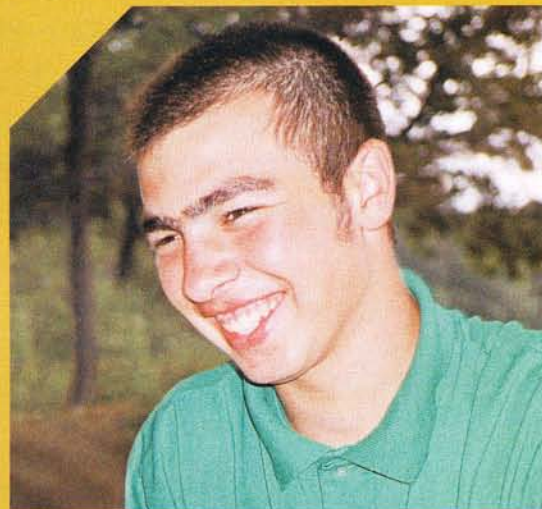
Third, for Seeds to develop and increase its impact, we need access to more of you, more programming in the region, and more focus on substantive programs. As you get older, you will hunger for more emphasis on training and skills that will help you in your professional lives. Indeed, the best answer to the often asked question, "Does Seeds of Peace work?" is to help you make your professional mark. Our recently concluded agreement with Sesame Workshop will train our older Seeds to conduct coexistence work in kindergartens, and the media internships sponsored by the Daniel Pearl Foundation are exciting new departures in this area. We have also created a special position in the region for a regional coordinator to focus on our Jordanian and Egyptian Seeds.

Fourth, focusing on our key priorities in terms of new initiatives will be critical during 2004. Next year, I have identified three new initiatives: creating a discrete program for our 18-and-older Israeli and Palestinian Seeds run out of the Center in Jerusalem; an exciting new Arab and American dialogue initiative during this summer's third camp session which will bring 60 young Arabs (Kuwaiti, Bahraini, Saudi, UAE and Jordanian) together with young Americans from all over the country; and finally, a rededication of the Jerusalem Center for Coexistence next fall (5 years after its creation) in honor of John Wallach.

Finally, I want to thank all of you Seeds for your courage and determination to never give up, no matter how tough the situation becomes. I am proud of you; and you all have reason to be proud of all you have accomplished.

REMEMBERING ASEL

In October 2003, 200 Arab and Jewish Seeds of Peace gathered at the Jerusalem Center for Coexistence to remember beloved Seed Asel Asleh (1983-2000). Asel was one of thirteen Arab citizens of Israel killed by police in October 2000, in confrontations that erupted across the country. The memorial opened with a screening of "The Day He Was Shot," an award-winning documentary film produced by Israeli Seeds Ron Roman and Eli Steinberg (www.studentfilmfestival.org/winner.htm). Asel's Arab and Jewish friends from Seeds of Peace shared memories of Asel's life and their reactions to his death. Asel's sister Nardin Asleh told the story of Asel from his family's perspective, and presented their disappointment with the Or Commission Report, which was published in August 2003 after three years of a government-mandated investigation of the "October events." The report condemned police usage of live fire on unarmed citizens, but failed to assign responsibility for Asel's death and others caused by the policy it condemned.



Letter to Asel, Three Years After

People talk of Asel as a funny, friendly, outgoing guy, goofing around and putting a smile on everyone's face, a good listener and a great supporter. The image is not wrong but I want to add a few shades to it. When I think of Asel, I think of a pretty serious guy, a sensitive person and a responsible human being.

We became friends at the Kibbutz Yahel seminar. Our first long conversation was on the grass while everyone was busy with Iftar. The Muslims had been fasting all day. The Jews didn't want to miss out on the fun. We spoke about violence, I remember, because you asked me. You didn't mind that I didn't have answers. I realized this was a special moment. Asel was confiding in me, Asel who always smiled and never shared his pain because he felt his job was to be the protective friend. During that seminar we celebrated my 14th birthday. 5 years have passed. I am 19, older than you. You used to be the older one.

I had the luck of going with you to camp again in 1999. This second time, I began to understand your behavior. You felt obligated. In co-ex, instead of discussing our worries, we talked about the campers and how we could help them. I was struck by your ability to overcome any obstacle in the effort to be heard.

I was doing math homework when Ned called me to say you had been shot and killed. It took a while to sink in; to realize there would be no more phone conversations, or visits, that your life had been brutally taken and things would never be the same again. At first, I was angry with you. It seemed you left us here with the problems. I had thought that we would continue living, questioning, and struggling together. Now I've grown some. I am angry with incompetent leaders, with people who want to kill me and others, and with myself.

Your death changed the significance of many things in my life. These past 3 years I learned the meaning of guilt, that one can carry this emotion until it breaks their soul. I know we taught each other a lot about identity and individuality but we also learned the strength of togetherness.

Asel, I still don't have the answers though I question myself till it

hurts, but I have come to understand that with all the pain I am privileged still. For knowing you and for being able to share your memory with everyone I can. You will go on, just as you promised.

Shir Givoni (Hod Hasharon)

Reflections From the Memorial

It was an honor for me to be introduced to Asel even if it was only for three or four hours of talking about him. I send all my condolences to his family for losing such a great son and a great Seed. I want to tell all the Seeds that couldn't be there for whatever reason how important it was. At the memorial, we discussed with Asel's sister and his friends about how he lived and died, all in his Seeds of Peace shirt. We heard the funny stories, about his character and humility and love for Seeds of Peace, how he started SeedsNet. Thanks to him we are all in touch with each other.

I am so sad that I never got to know the beautiful character of Asel, but at least now I know a little about him. I am sorry for his loss and I wish that all of you could get to know him. God bless his soul, and his family.

Dina Kort (Jerusalem)

When Asel Asleh was killed in October 2000, I was twelve years old. But I didn't hear his story until I went to Seeds of Peace camp in the summer of 2003. There, I lived in the same bunk that Asel had lived in. At the Memorial, I saw on video Asel doing the same cheers I had been doing in camp. Only then did I finally understand the tragedy of his death, and the importance of what we are all doing here.

Sagi Ganot (Holon)

I just finished watching the video "The Day He Was Shot" on the Internet. I'm speechless. I became aware from the Fall 2002 issue of The Olive Branch, and the Tribute book that Seeds of Peace made after Asel was killed.

The video had my stomach in knots, and the magazine had tears welling up in my eyes. I've been aware of the investigation and the controversial Or Commission Report into the killing of Arab citizens in October 2000, but I didn't know that a Seed was one of the victims. What a terrible and tragic irony, and what a huge loss for humanity Asel's death was.

Helaine Block (Detroit)

Camp 2003: A Time to Shine!

Young people from six conflict regions came together at Seeds of Peace's 11th International Camp. They returned home with new-found determination and confidence in themselves to change their world



A New Lens on Life

Victoria Kleanthous (Nicosia)

Seeds of Peace changed my perspective on life, not only in terms of Cyprus and politics, but also in terms of interpersonal relationships. If someone was meant to reject the idea of coexistence between Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots, that would be me. However, when I had the opportunity to talk with Turkish-Cypriot teenagers, to discuss the conflict, fight for my beliefs and explain my viewpoints, I realized that I was one of the most fortunate people in the world: I had become a Seed of Peace. I used to have a totally different picture in my head of the Turkish-Cypriots. When I finally met some of them at camp, I realized we share almost the same fears, aspirations, goals and emotions; we all are human beings, equal in rights and dignity. Labels, identities and religions should not separate people. Instead, they should bring them together as they did with us at camp. I became friends with the people I used to consider my enemies. I opened my heart to them and then I was able to view life from a new lens. During the short time we spent at camp, I realized that my "enemies" do have faces and that peace is not as distant as people think. It is feasible and close to reality.

Racing Past the Impossible

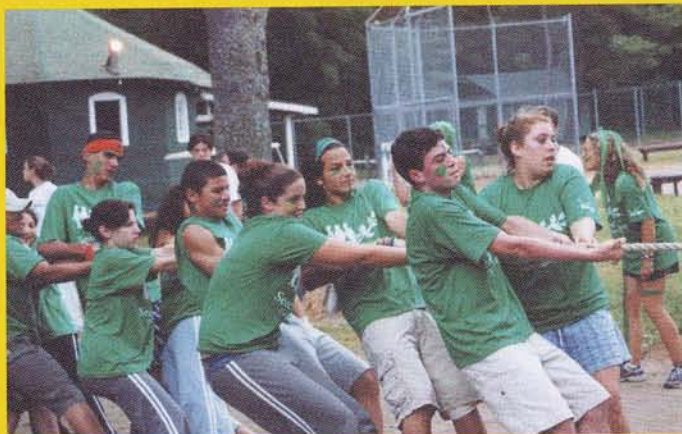
Mirit Gorohovsky (Ashdod)

Do you know the feeling when you really want to do something but you're too afraid that you'll be terrible? Sometimes, that feeling made me give up without even trying. But while I was at camp this year, I decided to do something some people will call a little crazy; I decided to run the 10 kilometer "Beach to Beacon" road race.

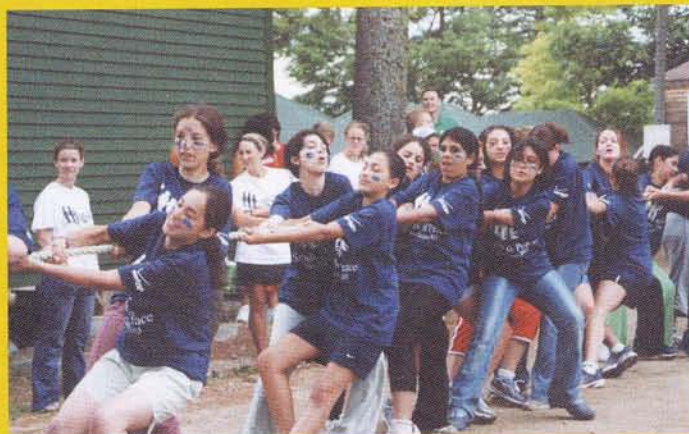
Don't get me wrong. I'm not a great runner. I'm actually pretty slow, but I still love running. I couldn't sleep the night before. I was about to run the longest race in my life!

I was so anxious the day of the run. It was Saturday, 5 AM and raining. We arrived at the starting line. We got chips to put on our shoe laces to time us. I was afraid that I would come in last, but as soon as I saw the 5000 people that took part in this long race to benefit Seeds of Peace, it didn't matter anymore. The race began, I began running, and didn't stop till it was over.

I set a goal for myself and achieved it. This is what I remember most from camp - thinking things are impossible, but finding out that only we determine what is impossible. I did it in a physical challenge, but it wasn't only physical for me; it was a test of my willpower and my inner strength to fight for the things I believe I can do. In order to achieve the greatest things you need to take the biggest risks, and I'm not afraid to take those risks now.



Pulling together for a better future!



Where We're All Equal

Tala El-Yousef (Jerusalem)

My first day at camp wasn't a good start. I didn't know a soul. I thought that for the next three weeks I would be alone. After a few days, I got used to the schedule and I felt much better. I got to know a lot of new people from the other side. During our coexistence sessions, I listened to the other side and tried to understand. Sometimes we argued and disagreed, but outside the sessions, we were friends as usual. We talked about the discrimination and prejudice that we face at home.

There is no place like camp! It's a place where your skin color or nationality don't matter; all people are equal. I never imagined that I would make a lot of new friends in just three weeks, but we were all brothers and sisters by the end. Before camp, many people discouraged me, saying it was nonsense to go to a camp to discuss peace and coexist with the other side. I followed my heart to camp, and I'm glad that I did.



Seeds show what trust is all about



Jennie and Tcho-Tcho smile for the camera



Seeds in the field

All photos credited to Susi Eggenberger

Trust on a Tightrope

Shanoor Servai (Mumbai)

Only during our last "group challenge" session did we realize that we would succeed if we work as a group and we did. During that climbing session, I learned to trust. Terror gripped me as I slowly climbed the ladder to the rope I had to walk across. My Pakistani friend followed me up the ladder. Both of us had to get to the other side, relying on the each other for support. I was petrified, vowing not to leave the ladder that I clung to for dear life. She was calm and searched for a way for

"She promised that she would lead me through each step, and she did"

both of us to cross the rope. She promised that she would never let me fall, that she would lead me through each step, and she did. I placed my trust in her, and made it to the other side. When it was my turn to help her, I promised not to let go, and we both succeeded.

Standing on a rope forty feet above the ground, I not only trusted someone completely, but I trusted a Pakistani. That was when I realized that 'Indian' and 'Pakistani' are barriers that do not matter. She was my friend, and THAT was all that mattered! During our coexistence discussions, I would first argue with anger, hearing what my friends had to say but not truly listening. Gradually I understood that there is another side to our conflict. Maybe I didn't agree with everything, but I was willing to accept their perspective and acknowledge that both of us are victims, suffering from the oppression of our conflict.

New Faces, New Challenges

Marisa Gorovitz (Maitland, Florida)

Camp was more amazing than I ever imagined. In my Arab-Israeli coexistence group, I learned an incredible amount about Arabic culture, Israel, the Palestinians, Islam and the history of the Middle East. Coexistence was the most difficult part for me, because I came knowing only the Israeli and Jewish perspectives. It shocked me to learn how some of the Arabs had been treated at Israeli checkpoints. I never knew the extent that the Arabs suffer from the conflict.

The intensity of the Color Games competition was astounding! Everyone was completely oblivious to who belonged to which delegation the only thing that mattered was whether you were green or blue (I was green!). One of the contests I was in was waterskiing. I was terrified, because I did not know any "tricks," I only knew how to stand up on water-skis. However, with the encouragement of my teammates and coaches, I tried a few tricks, and it worked! My teammate Hilary and I won the water-ski event for our team!

Leaving camp and my new friends was the hardest thing I've ever done. We shared unforgettable moments, from debating about Jenin to climbing in the Group Challenge to dancing away our last night together in Washington D.C. I keep in touch with my friends through e-mail, Seedsnet, the phone, and the mail, and I hope to visit them in their various countries!

Breaking News

Making Headlines

In October 2003, over 120 Seeds from around the world participated in the "Breaking News, Making Headlines," media conference. Seeds met international media experts to learn the tools of the trade.

Weaving the Truth

Maayan Poleg (Kfar Sava)
& Miriam Liebman (Detroit)

What is it that drives people to write, to put down their ideas, their thoughts and their stories in words? What drives us right now to tell our story, to share what we have learned? Words are power. That is what we learned at the New York media conference. In our world, people starve for information. To satisfy this need, they make newspapers, books, television, radio and magazines as powerful as they are.

A newspaper is like a rug. It tells an intricate story on top but you have to read between the lines to understand the detail. The late Wall Street Journal reporter Daniel Pearl once went to Iran looking for a story on the situation there and came home with a story on Persian rugs. Pearl's life was later tragically brought to an end in the winter of 2002 at the hands of terrorists. His success at the Wall Street Journal newspaper was due to his persistence and sociability. While visiting that paper, we learned from his friends that he had everything it took to weave the perfect rug of words.

A year before his Daniel Pearl's death, the Twin Towers were destroyed by terrorists. During the media conference we participated in the Newspaper Workshop and as a group visited Ground Zero, the site of this tragedy, to capture a story and report it. Ironically, we all went to the same site and came out with different stories, all of them true. That is the power of words. As we found out, the truth can be told in different ways and from different points of view. If the reader wants to know the whole picture, reading just one article or hearing just one report will not be enough. What we have found, is that as much as a journalist can try to be neutral, he will still, between the lines, give his own opinion.

After reporting from Ground Zero, our next step was to get our stories published. We met with the editor of Teenspeak, a newspaper that publishes teenagers' stories. She assigned stories to each of us and gave us deadlines to meet. It gave us the opportunity to share with our audience our personal stories, which to them are out of the ordinary — it is not often that they get the chance to hear about the lives of teenagers outside their countries.

We too had the chance to read stories that for us were out of the ordinary. We compared newspapers from around the world to find

what factors distinguish one country's paper from another. The front page of a newspaper has to draw one's attention enough so he will be interested in reading what is inside. An Indian newspaper had Britney Spears on the front page while the Egyptian paper would not show a picture of a female as revealing as Britney Spears. The Afghan newspaper, on the other hand, was published in three different languages. We learned that the front page of a newspaper is a reflection of a culture's and country's mindset.

In order for a newspaper to be read, it has to give the people what they want, and in doing so, the people are the ones shaping the newspaper. Just as each rug reflects the culture it came from, a country's culture is reflected through its newspaper. Throughout the workshop, we learned, like Daniel Pearl, to weave our words together to form our own rugs.

Realizing the Media's Value

Mir Akhgar (Kabul)

I was the luckiest student from Afghanistan to attend the "Breaking News, Making Headlines conference". I got a lot of information and experience from the conference. Before attending the conference I thought that all the media was wrong. I felt that they were reporting incorrectly about Afghanistan, in their coverage of the places destroyed during the course of the twenty-three year civil war that has afflicted my country.

I was amazed by these reports, because the place which I live in Kabul is called Khair Khana; if you go there you will never see any sign of conflict because there was none. But when I saw reports from international TV networks like BBC and CNN, I asked myself where the destroyed places that the media talked about were. But when I returned to Afghanistan, I realized the value of the media because not only did it teach foreigners about Afghanistan, but is

able to teach Afghans about places in our country that we had not visited or knew about. Through the media and the images I saw, I went to places that I wasn't able to visit before.

In Kabul I was asked by my school principal to give a presentation to more than 1000 high school students about my experiences. They were really interested in Seeds of Peace and our activities. I began a coexistence course in our school that we now hold twice a week. They include discussions about the responsibility of youth in Kabul and our relationship with our global neighbors.



Christiane Amanpour of CNN speaks to Seeds delegates via live videoconference

A Whole New World

Eran Hoch (Mazkeret Batya)

One hundred and twenty five Seeds attended the New York Media Conference, "Breaking News, Making Headlines." At the conference, anchors and reporters from all over the globe spoke to us. Some of the media outlets represented were ABC News, Sesame Street and NBC radio.

The conference was split into three different parts: morning panels, where we learned about the daily life of someone who works in the media; afternoon workshops, where we worked on different types of media (newspaper, television, radio, etc.) and came up with a final product for presentation; and the evenings, when we had free time. My workshop was the television workshop, and with the help of our group leaders we came up with three news segments.

The conference gave me the amazing chance to meet people I hadn't seen since 2002. I also got the privilege of meeting Seeds whom I had never met, such as Seeds from the Balkans. In addition to the amazing programming, the conference gave us a lot of time to just hang out and talk, meet new Seeds, and strengthen old relationships. I feel grateful for this amazing chance to meet new people.

The conference opened up a whole new world to me. I now see how the media might seem deceiving and how it plays a very crucial role in our regional conflicts. I learned

*"I learned to
question the news I
see, and think before
I base my opinions
on just what I see."*



photo: Amy Y. Lee

Leen Alami presents her group's declaration in the closing session

to question the news I see, and think before I base my opinions on just what I see. Media in all its sources, whether on the Internet, newspapers, television, magazines or radio, is the most powerful tool for publicizing opinions in the twenty-first century.

Making an Impact with Media

Radhika Lalla (Mumbai)

Having heard all about the last Seeds of Peace conference on "Uprooting Hatred and Terrorism," I went to the New York media conference expecting hard work, late nights and lots of fun. That is what we got. During the afternoon workshops I worked in the opinion editorial group with ten other Seeds and two workshop leaders, and learned how to write a good opinion-editorial and get it published. The evenings were spent getting to know New York City through excursions to places like Madame Tussaud's wax museum and a basketball game.

The media and its ways have always interested me because of the pivotal role that it plays in today's world. A single story and a series of pictures are tools that are capable of starting or ending movements, making or breaking people's lives. This conference gave us an opportunity to learn how to use these tools to the maximum to carry our message and to make the biggest impact. We gained a bit of insight

into how the world of media functions and how to use it to our advantage. It was, in my opinion, the starting point in a long journey toward understanding the media and using it effectively to further our cause.



photo courtesy of Rebecca Hamlin

Elmo wishes he were a Seed...

Bringing the Seeds Spirit to Campus

Dialogue Groups. Volunteering. Maintaining Friendships. Seeds studying at American universities continue spreading the Seeds message and enjoy a fantastic reunion over the Thanksgiving holiday last November.

Lehigh's New Forum for Dialogue

Mohamad Matar (Nuseirat Camp, Gaza)

When I started my college career at Lehigh University this fall, finding the cafeteria was a difficult task for me. Like any other international freshman, I had hard times remembering the names and locations of the buildings and facilities on campus. One week later, after going through the orientation program, I introduced myself to everybody, and had a chat with almost everyone I met. Slowly I started to recognize the labyrinth around me. Once settled, I started thinking about creating an Arab-Israeli open discussion. I looked for an Israeli partner to join me in a panel to talk about Middle Eastern issues from different perspectives. I wanted to organize an event where I could express my point of view. I do not aim to force people to think the way I do, but rather present different perspectives and let them make their own judgement. Eventually a Israeli student joined me in my project. Nine organizations sponsored our event. We decided to include both the presidents of Hillel (the Foundation for Jewish Campus Life) and the Muslim Student Association on our panel. My vision of the discussion was to have a few people sitting in a tiny room listening to us and sharing their opinions. But as it turned out, we had about

"It was the first time, as I was told by many professors, that a Palestinian student presented the Palestinian perspective at Lehigh. Furthermore, it was expressed alongside an Israeli"

200 students in a huge auditorium in addition to staff members and professors listening to us. The discussion lasted two hours. It was the first time, as I was told by many professors, that a Palestinian student presented the Palestinian perspective at Lehigh. Furthermore, it was expressed alongside an Israeli perspective. As a result of our success, we decided to continue the program throughout the year, as an on-going dialogue discussing different Middle Eastern issues each time. I am currently working with Hillel and the Muslim Students Association to organize a joint dinner of Kosher and Halal food. That will bring people from the two organizations together in order to socialize and break the ice. It will help in removing tensions, and will encourage the tolerance of both religions toward each other. Also, as a Muslim observing Ramadan, I organized a joint Iftar (sunset meal to break the daily fast) in my dormitory, to which we invited Muslims and non-Muslims

The Seeds Spirit at Harvard

Rachel Culley (Mercer, Maine)

I arrived at Harvard on a cloudy day in August nervous and unsure of what to expect. Luckily, I barely had time to think about this as I plunged into my orientation programs. As a part of Harvard's First-Year Urban Program, I volunteered in Boston's Chinatown for a week, discussing issues of social justice, community service, diversity and activism with other first-year students, and our group leaders. I met students from around the globe, with diverse backgrounds and beliefs, and was delighted to hear their fascinating perspectives.

Soon, classes started, and it seemed that my life was full of papers, tests and deadlines. Yet, I tried to remain active in social justice and community service projects. I joined the Harvard Chinatown Organizing Committee, which focuses on building community ties and empowerment in Chinatown - a historically oppressed area of immigrants and low-income families. I also joined the Chinatown section of the Harvard Progressive Advocacy Group, which lobbies for improvements in areas such as affordable housing, homelessness and youth leadership.

I was also inspired to join "Strong Women Strong Girls," an after-school mentoring program for girls in grades 3-6. I mentor once a week at the Hurley School in Boston's South End. The girls I work with are mostly from Spanish-speaking countries, and many are recent immigrants to the United States. As mentors, we teach them about respect, communication, public speaking and other important leadership skills. Recently, my mentoring group made "Peace Cards"



Rachel and fellow students volunteer in the Boston community

for National Kindness Week, and sent them to the Seeds of Peace Center in Jerusalem. The girls were very excited to make cards for their new friends. I truly believe that Seeds of Peace was my inspiration and guiding force as I began my first year of university. At the end of the first semester, I have found new ways to carry on the Seeds of Peace mission on campus.

A Reason to Give Thanks

Karen Karniol-Tambour (Netanya)

Studying at Princeton as a foreign student, I am learning about the different American holidays. Regarding Thanksgiving, I've heard friends express sentimentality for tradition, quality time with family and large quantities of turkey. Only occasionally the original theme of the holiday, giving thanks, came up. Instead of going to a friend's place and experiencing a "wholesome" American Thanksgiving, I was invited to go to a small town in Connecticut and spend the holiday in a very un-American way. But along the way, I realized what I wanted to give thanks for.

Sixty Seeds of Peace members came together for our Thanksgiving celebration. I nearly had a heart attack when I saw three friends whom I have not seen for over three years. While I was going to high school in Netanya, Israel, Najeeb was a Palestinian living in Beit Jala, Dalia was an Egyptian living in Cairo, and Jamil a Jordanian living in Amman. When the intifada started three years ago, it became impossible to keep in touch and visit each other. We are older, and we have been through a lot over the past three years. But after these years of living on opposite sides in a war, we could still look at each other as human beings and catch up like old friends. At Princeton, most of my friends are American. But it struck me over the weekend how much culturally closer I feel to Arabs than to my American friends. Sometimes people speak of a clash between Western and Arab civilizations, with Israel being a part of Western civilization. Yet Israelis and

spend Thanksgiving giving thanks. For me, the meaning of Thanksgiving was giving thanks to America as the land where a reunion of Israelis and Arabs is possible.

From Ideas to Action

Ghadeer Tarazi (Ramallah)

The vibrant energy that filled the room during Thanksgiving dinner, hosted by the generous president of Manhattanville College, Richard Berman, was fascinating. Seeing faces that we haven't seen for so many years, catching up with friends, eating delicious food and enjoying the delightful atmosphere was truly something to be thankful for. The rest of the three days were almost like camp. Hanging out with friends, enjoying fun activities and most importantly holding discussions. Most discussions were centered around trying to answer the complex question of what Seeds of Peace is and what effects it has on our lives. But what was different this time was that the discussions weren't argument-oriented. We were no longer interested challenging each other's opinions but instead focused on using our different perspectives to shape a better understanding of our expectations for the future. One of the major ideas discussed during the retreat was a possible retreat for Seeds of Peace alumni. Different options were suggested in order to handle the logistics of the event. A committee will be formed to handle organization of the reunion. This reunion serve as a meeting point for all Seeds to re-establish the lost connections, as invitations to rejoin Seeds of Peace, and most importantly, it will



Seeds classes of '95, '97 and '98; college classes of '04 and '05

Arabs dance to the same music, enjoy the same foods, and, let's be honest, are loud and up front and speak in similar languages that sound incredibly rough and angry to most Westerners. While in the Middle East our people were killing each other, in the US, cultural similarities made it easy for us Israelis and Arabs to hang out together, get to know each other and express mutual hopes for a shared brighter future. I don't know how many Americans actually



2003 Seeds of Peace students' Thanksgiving Retreat participants

function as a good starting point to open new possibilities for Seeds alumni to resume their involvement and influence in the organization. The Thanksgiving retreat gave me optimism, because it reminded me of the enormous potential that both Seeds of Peace and the Seeds themselves hold. It's our responsibility to carry out projects leading to a promising peace and a stable future for the region and its people.

Coexistence Marathon

In December, more than 150 Israeli and Palestinian Seeds participated in the annual Coexistence Marathon, enjoying intense discussions and planning year-round projects.

Acting Out

Mor Goshen (Afula)

After I returned home from camp last summer, I had to choose what activity to participate in at Seeds of Peace for the coming year. After listening to a brief description about a group named "Acting Out," which planned to produce and perform a show, I knew that this was what I wanted to take part in.

During this workshop we worked on our acting skills and how to express our ideas. The group got to know each other very well, but the hardest part was to figure out our message, and what means we would use to convey our message. We still have a variety of ideas. Some of the ideas are very strong and it is hard to express them, and some of them are very optimistic and even funny. Still all of the ideas have many things in common. Despite the fact they are all creative and interesting, they are all sharing the same vision. They all spread hope.

Nowadays, we are still dealing with some questions about the show — who will watch it? Are they ready for it? Are WE

"Instead of some Seeds with many ideas, we became actors with skits and direction . . . we became one united and caring group"

ready for it? Should we include situations from camp in our skits? How do we make we are not too corny?

We continued our meetings and brainstorming during last month's Coexistence Marathon. I felt it was a turning point for all of us. Instead of some Seeds with many ideas, we became actors with skits and direction. Instead of individual Seeds from the region, we became one caring and united group.

To be honest, the marathon in general wasn't easy at all for me. Many things have been changed. Yet, knowing I'm about to work on the "Confrontation Dance," or practicing the monologues, or even just laughing because Ofer and Ronny (two group members) fell asleep again made all the difference. There is something very warm about us, about our group. We are all working on OUR show . . . we are all sharing the desire to see the final result. We know we'll perform together. People are counting on us, and we are counting on one another.

In the last two years Seeds of Peace has become a very important part in my life. Most of the valuable things in my life are somehow connected to SOP — my principles, my best friends, my way of life. Thanks to "Acting Out" I got the

opportunity to contribute. I got the chance to leave my mark, and dedicate something real to Seeds. This is our opportunity to spread the message. To let the people here in the conflict zone know what we learned. To show them what we believe in. This is our chance to try and make a difference.

This show is something unpredictable, but in the end it will be right. I know I'll have the time of my life. Can't wait to see you in the crowd!

Just Like Camp

Dina Kort (Jerusalem)

I participated in the Coexistence Marathon that took place at Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salaam (Oasis of Peace) in late December. It was so much fun, I felt that I was back in camp at Maine. Many counselors from the camp in Maine came, and there were over 150 Seeds who attended!

All the Seeds were divided in groups for the marathon, according to the activity groups we participate in during the year (media, coexistence, language course, outreach and others). I was in the media group. During the marathon, our group undertook three projects: 1) interviews with Seeds about the marathon, 2) filming a documentary about camp and the marathon itself, and 3) taking photos for the marathon. The first two groups had a video camera to do the interviews with and the last group had a regular camera.

"Time flew by at the Coexistence Marathon.

It was great to feel like I was back at camp

although it was just for two days"

I thought the most entertaining part of the weekend was the evening activities. On the first night we had a variety show and each group had a short skit to do. The second night we had a scavenger hunt and a challenge activity that each group took part in. After we finished with these, we had the "falafel competition." It was so much fun. A blindfolded person from each group had to fill pita bread with salad and other falafel ingredients, and then another person from the same group had to eat it. The trick was that he couldn't be touching the ground. It was so funny.

Time flew by at the Coexistence Marathon. It was great to feel like I was back at camp again although it was just for two days. That's not enough, I know, but at least we were able to re-create many of the activities and feelings of camp.



Israeli and Palestinian Seeds and staff enjoying the Coexistence Marathon at the Oasis of Peace, Neve Shalom/Wahat Al-Salaam

Planning for the Future

Yaniv Lushinsky (Haifa)

During the past two months, I and other Seeds have been meeting weekly in Beit Ha'Gefen, a Jewish-Arab community center in Haifa. We are members of the Outreach Group through Seeds of Peace, and try to find ways to be involved in our communities. At the Coexistence Marathon last month, we had a chance to discuss what we had accomplished and our goals for the coming year.

This marathon was different from the one I attended last year. Seeds of Peace's regional program has expanded, and this marathon was the living proof of how big the organization is, and of how many people are involved in giving us time to work and have fun.

At the marathon my group discussed our goals, which were relevant both to our group specifically and Seeds as a whole. Our goals are to do something for the communities that we live in, and to spread the message of SOP. In the beginning of the year many suggestions were brought up by the group, such as: helping the needy by donating food or clothing; doing presentations about SOP; and painting houses in under-privileged neighborhoods. Another thing our group did in December was take part in Haifa's Holiday of Holidays festival. This festival is considered a symbol of co-existence between Jews and Arabs in the city, and as Seeds, who are members of an organization promoting the same cause, we took part in it. We explained to people who were interested in the program,

what do we do as Seeds. We did all of that, but did not forget to paint children's faces, giving them some Seeds-style homemade makeup.

The discussions we had in the marathon were on a variety of matters. The first one was talking about the Festival in a more critical way — we each shared our points of view about it and explored our definitions for coexistence, and how others view it. Secondly, our group continued to advance in our yearly program. We continued to brainstorm on what things we should do,

“This marathon, despite its intensity, was far beyond great. It raised a number of difficult issues that we need to struggle with to make SOP as great as it can be”

what's possible and what isn't. In between group meetings, we had an extended forum of all outreach groups from different cities in the country. Another heated discussion was created due to some hard questions about the future of the regional program. The discussion dealt with issues such as fun vs. work in SOP seminars.

This marathon, despite its intensity, was far beyond great. It raised a number of difficult issues that we need to struggle with to make SOP as great as it can be.

Summer@the Center!

This summer, over 500 Seeds, family, and friends from Israel, the West Bank and Gaza participated together in exciting programs at the Jerusalem Center for Coexistence!

Jerusalem: City of Surprises

Mahmoud Al-Ashi (Gaza)

The Jerusalem seminar provided the Seeds with a comprehensive background about the situation in Jerusalem by touring every side of the city, and learning about its history, religion and politics. We visited amazing areas in East and West, Old and New Jerusalem. We were provided with information about the meaning and value of Jerusalem to Islam, Christianity and Judaism by religious scholars. We heard many different points of view. Everywhere we went, we interviewed Jerusalemites, to know what real life is like in this holy, conflicted city.

Two events surprised me the most: while we were touring the streets of West Jerusalem, a policeman stopped me



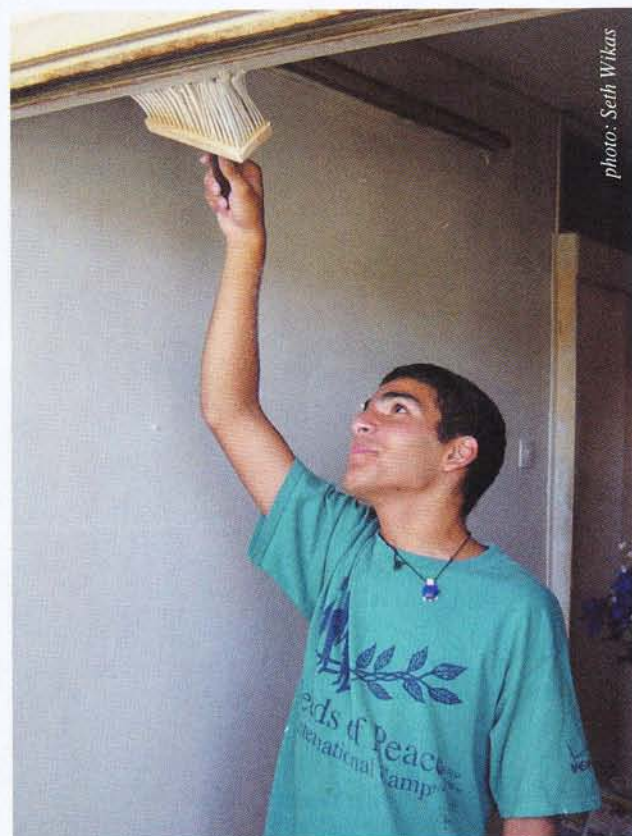
Jerusalemite Paysach Freedman speaks with Mahmoud and fellow Seeds during the Jerusalem seminar

near the Sbarro pizzeria, which has been bombed in the past. He held my group for a long time to make sure that we had entry permissions and IDs. This affected me, because I am a Seed who exerts all possible effort to achieve peace. Even though I had all the proper documents, they only let me go when two Israeli Seeds arrived and made them let me go.

Another surprise occurred during my visit to the house of an ultra-Orthodox rabbi named Paysach Freedman (pictured above). He welcomed us very warmly into his home. I observed that this great person has the hope of peace inside his heart. He told us that Judaism has two basic principles: loving God and loving neighbors. That made me feel happy, because those are the principles of my religion, Islam. I think that because there are similarities between the two religions, it will be easier to achieve peace.

Making a Real Difference in Dimona

Ido Jacoby (Moshav Tomer)



Yosi Yeshaya painting a house in Dimona

The Makin' a Difference seminar was unique and fulfilling. We spent a day with students who live in Neve Yaakov in Jerusalem. To break the ice we spent an evening at a bowling alley together, and discussed religion. We had a number of heated discussions about coexistence and the conflict, but ended with a dinner at the beautiful "Tayelet" promenade, overlooking all of Jerusalem.

On the second day we divided into mixed groups of Seeds and Neve Yaakov students. We went to fix the homes of struggling families in the economically depressed town of Dimona. When I entered one home, I was shocked because the people were so poor.

We worked for five hours painting, plastering, and helping the people, and, though I felt like I was doing a good thing, there was still so much left to repair when we had to go. Still, I think the seminar was exciting, important and fulfilling to us not just as Seeds, but as human beings.

Making a real difference in Jericho

Nawar Al-Qutob (Jerusalem)



Tamara Qarage speaks with a student in Jericho

As a Seed of Peace, I've always wanted to help the people in my country. During the summer, I was given a great opportunity to help at a school in Jericho. At first, I thought that whatever we do, we can't change reality. However, it didn't take me long to realize that helping one person in this world can really make a difference for the whole community.

At the school, in the Ein Al-Sultan refugee camp in Jericho, we were struck by the utter poverty. The people in the streets seemed miserable and hopeless. But, when we arrived at the school, the kids were enthusiastic to see us. They sang songs and tried their best to make their teachers happy and proud of them. While they sang, my eyes filled with tears upon hearing the name Palestine. It aroused feelings of sorrow buried in my heart. In Jerusalem, where I live, I feel that I can never say the word Palestine freely nor can I raise my flag. Therefore, it was a great pleasure to hear them singing patriotically.

"It didn't take me long to realize that helping one person in this world can really make a difference for the whole community"

We played, painted the school walls, ate and sang. It was one of the best days in my life. We talked about their dreams and the path they want to travel in their lifetime. It was nice to hear these ambitious kids talking freely about the future they want. But I was also sad, knowing that the current political situation may be an obstacle in their path to that future.

Summer @ The Center!

Who said Seeds could only enjoy the summer at camp? For the first time in three years, Seeds from all over Israel and Palestine came together for a packed summer of activities in the Middle East.

Mother Tongue/Leave Your Mark

Seeds taught each other practical Hebrew and Arabic language skills, through discussions, games and a hilarious trilingual talent show. The Seeds also created, with the help of an Israeli and Palestinian artist, a multicultural quilt representing their mutual hopes and dreams.

Bring a Friend

Twice during the summer, Seeds brought their friends to the Center to show them what Seeds of Peace is all about. Seeds and friends participated in games, co-existence discussions and enjoyed a cookout dinner at the promenade in Jerusalem.

Media Seminar

What does the media do? What affect does it have on us? Seeds explored these questions with the aid of professional journalists who spoke to Seeds and answered questions. But they found time to relax each afternoon, splitting up into teams and competing in a variety of games.

Jerusalem Seminar

Israeli and Palestinian Seeds took a unique tour of a unique city. They explored the sites, streets and homes of East and West, Old and New Jerusalem. They interviewed Jewish, Christian and Muslim Jerusalemites to see the holy city from every point of view.

Makin' a Difference

Israeli and Palestinian Seeds reached out to help their communities. Israeli Seeds traveled to Dimona to assist poorer families by painting their homes. Palestinians traveled to Jericho to volunteer in a refugee camp school and led activities for the students. In the end, they shared their experiences together at the Center in Jerusalem.

Human Rights

Seeds explored how human rights issues affect the world they live in through intense discussions and hearing from human rights experts; they also exercised their right to relax by swimming and dancing the night away!

Celebrate the Summer!

What better way to celebrate the summer than with a party? Seeds came together for a carnival, performances by Israeli and Palestinian rappers, great food and a huge talent show.

Summer@the Center!

Media Seminar

Amin Habash (Abu Ghosh)

The media seminar took place at Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam (an Arab-Jewish village, whose name in English means "Oasis of Peace"). The seminar included lectures led by well-known Arab and Israeli journalists and professors, discussing many aspects of the media coverage of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Media is often used to make the audience sympathize with one side or the other, so that different channels often broadcast contradicting news and information. The seminar taught us about the biases of the media, and how to write our own news stories from different angles.

The seminar was also full of fun. In the afternoons, we



The red team competing for the glory of UG

were divided into four groups which played against each other in events like "Steal the Kosher/Hallal Bacon," Water Gladiators and a relay race where we had to spin around a baseball bat. Everyone was so dizzy from that game that some people fell on the ground. I went the wrong direction I was so dizzy! All the teams competed for the glory of "UG." No one knew what "UG" was, but everyone kept talking about it until we found out that "UG" turned out to be, well . . . very, very small. The purpose of all this was to let Arab and Israeli Seeds cooperate with each other to reach one goal - and in that, the Media Seminar was successful, useful and entertaining. And it

"The purpose of all this was to let the Arab and Israeli Seeds cooperate with each other to reach one goal"

wouldn't have been without the effort made by the staff at the Center, who worked very hard to make the Seeds remember the 2003 summer vacation as one of the best.

Celebrate the Summer

Lior Lelchizki (Ashdod)

At the end of the summer, several hundred Seeds of Peace and their friends from all around Israel and Palestine gathered at Neve Shalom to celebrate the summer programs they had experienced together. We started with a huge carnival with games like shaving a water balloon and bobbing for apples. The day was hot, the water was cold, and everybody enjoyed it a lot. We actually got a mechanical bull, which kept on throwing our fellow Seeds off! Later, we listened to live music by the Arab-Israeli rap group D.A.M., and the Israeli singer Dikla. Next, Seeds Amin Habash and Mieka Rinsky presented the main event: THE SUMMER TALENT SHOW! Gifted Seeds, families and staff danced, sang, played music and entertained the giant crowd. At the end, the summer staff presented a great movie which summed up all of the activities, with great pictures, music and animation. It was an incredible end to an extraordinary summer!

Old Seeds, New Friends

Yael Lammfromm & Ayelet Birenbaum (Haifa)

The Jerusalem Center staff worked up a summer full of action for old and new Seeds, and we attended the Bring a Friend event, where our friends from home



Center staff member Carlos Miranda leads Bring-A-Friend

could meet our friends from "the other side." The event turned out to be much more than we anticipated. As we arrived, the usual loud music, good food and smiling faces made everyone feel welcome and comfortable. My good friend and classmate, Ayelet, came with me. After tolerating my stories of Seeds for a year, she finally saw what we do.

Ayelet says, "At the Seeds Center in Jerusalem I met Palestinian teenagers for the first time. We had many fun



Damascus Gate in Jerusalem: Jewish, Muslim and Christian Seeds explore the city that is holy to all of them

activities, talked and got to know each other. Through playing games and discussing tolerance, politics and feminism in our societies, I met the human beings behind the news reports. I understand now that Seeds of Peace is not day-dreaming about peace and love between the Israelis and the Palestinians - it is a way of achieving understanding between people, no matter where they come from. It also improved my English for a day!

Leaving our Mark with Language

Anan Abdallah (Jericho)

The activities this summer at the Center were beyond imagination. The Mother Tongue/Leave Your Mark workshop was the first activity of the summer and it was the first time we had so many Seeds from Israel, the West Bank and Gaza in the same place since 2000. During the week, Israeli and Palestinians taught each other their mother tongues (Hebrew and Arabic). I learned a lot of Hebrew words and phrases in such a short amount of time, such as how to answer the phone, how to say holiday greetings, name objects inside my house, and introduce myself and my friends. The staff helped us learn the languages by labeling everything in our rooms (tables, chairs, beds, dressers) with their names in Hebrew and Arabic. I thought it was much better than learning it at school, because we learned practical language, by speaking. There was one game in which we competed

against each other, trying to label as many things as possible in the Center in Hebrew and Arabic on Post-it notes, so that by the end of the activity the entire Center was covered in Post-it notes. In the afternoons we worked on an art project, a quilt that we all helped make. It reminded me of the fact that we are many nations coming together as one, each nation being a piece of the quilt and that we can co-exist peacefully together as a unit.

After the week I realized how important it is to learn both Hebrew and Arabic through games and learning, to bring together both sides. When I returned home to Jericho I tried to continue the spirit, and worked with a friend to learn more Hebrew, in the way that I learned during the workshop, through games and speaking.

Getting Back that Seeds Feeling

Khaled Jamous (Nablus)

I haven't been active with Seeds of Peace for a long time. During the first two years of Intifada, I was only able to come to SOP seminars twice and that drove me mad. I always wanted to be as active as possible with Seeds of Peace. I decided that I had to take the first step and to participate in as many activities as possible this past summer. My Seeds of Peace spirit was reignited and I felt better. Seeds of Peace had a new meaning to me after every seminar and I got into deep discussions each week. I made new friendships and I felt active for the first time in a long time. Being active made me feel like I was making a difference, and it is a feeling I will never forget.

A Step Across the Line

In April 2003, leaders of both Cypriot communities allowed their citizens to cross the barricades dividing the island for the first time in a generation. Seeds of Peace from both sides took advantage of the chance to see all of the island.

Entering a Forbidden Zone

Cemal Kavasogullari (Lefkosa)

Those of you who have brothers or sisters know the feeling. How holy a place your sister's room is, a secret, unknown place, that you are not allowed to enter. You take glimpses when you see the door left open, you wonder how it is inside. It's a part of your home, but forbidden!

That is how I, a Turkish Cypriot, felt when I crossed to the south side of Cyprus this past summer. When the gates were finally opened for the first time since the war of 1974, thousands of people rushed to cross. For me, one of the best things about the opening of the gates is that I could see my Greek Cypriot friends from Seeds of Peace. I also saw places that my parents talked about in their memories of the past, which were sometimes happy and sometimes painful.

There were problems when the gates were first opened. Many people protested that Greek Cypriots had to show their passport when they crossed to the north. I felt uncomfortable about the provocative signs against Turks on the south side of the gates. But nothing could break the people's will of unity and seeing their land which they had been separated from for years.

During a visit to the south side with my family, an old Greek Cypriot man heard us speaking Turkish and jumped into our conversation. He surprised us by speaking Turkish too. We thought he was a Turkish Cypriot—but he was a Greek Cypriot who lived in North Cyprus before 1974. He remembered our Bayram Muslim holiday, the greetings and traditions. We had a great conversation with him about the old days and the recent news, and left him smiling and waving to us.

So the "sister's room" is open now, available to visit. Unfortunately the "home" is not completely united — yet.

Tourist in my Homeland

Nicolas Papamichael (Nicosia)

Turkish Cypriot leader Rauf Denktash created a huge tumult when he decided to allow Greek Cypriots to cross to Northern Cyprus. Thousands of Cypriots attempted to cross the barricades. In three weeks, 250,000 Greek Cypriots and 30,000 Turkish Cypriots crossed the "green line" for the first time

since 1974. Still, the majority of the two communities were unwilling to cross. The obstacles are many and they differ from person to person. Personally, I had doubts about crossing. I didn't and still don't want to show my passport in order to cross. How can a Cypriot show a passport to move from one part of his country to another? I am also against economically supporting the Turkish Cypriot regime before an agreement is reached, because the economic difference is a motivating factor in the negotiations. It's not that I don't want the best for Northern Cyprus, but because the best for all Cyprus, in my opinion, is reunification. While I had these objections, I deeply wanted to see the other part of my homeland.

I decided to cross with a bi-communal team. After we crossed the barricade in the center of Nicosia, Turkish Cypriot friends joined our tour. In the old city of Nicosia, it was as in the 1970s. Old shops, small streets and people relaxing outside their houses formed a wonderful picture. We went through the magnificent square to reach the bus to Kyrenia. The bus ride was exciting, as we traveled through the Pentadaxtilos mountains. The view was amazing, but nothing compared to the beauty of Kyrenia port. I vividly remember how the port beautifully matches the turquoise sea of Cyprus.

Unfortunately, I was ill at ease when I saw that every boat flies the flags of Turkey and Northern Cyprus. That image is hard for me to accept.

I crossed with mixed emotions. I had a great time. Seeing the beauty of my country made me love Cyprus even more. The people we met were extremely friendly, which gave me hope for future coexistence between the two communities. These nice feelings were incomplete, because I felt like a tourist in my own country.

The future of our island is bright. Greek and Turkish Cypriots must make the correct steps mutually and simultaneously for our long term future.

I Don't Forget

Spyros Spyrides (Nicosia)

In April 2003, the gates dividing Cyprus were opened for the first time in my life. I was excited to visit. I live in our capital, Nicosia, which is the only city in the world divided between north and south. My friend and I went to the checkpoint in the middle of the city, and waited three hours to cross.





Nadia (Greek Cypriot) and Jan (Turkish Cypriot) play Cyprus's national sport, tavli

I had seen the other side of the island in pictures with the slogan 'I don't forget,' and heard the stories of older people. The moment I crossed, I realized that all my life I thought I knew my country well, but actually I knew only half of it. During my visit, I often caught myself acting like a tourist, something I

"I saw places and people similar to my places and my people"

didn't want to do. Things were different than I expected. Instead of the ruins and damaged places that my teachers and society had brainwashed me to imagine, I saw places and people similar to my places and my people, besides the language.

At one point we got lost. We went to a police station to call a Turkish Cypriot friend of mine from Seeds of Peace. That day will stay in my mind forever. The police officer was kind. He offered us coffee and asked our opinions about opening the gates. This was strange; the 'enemy' was treating us nicely.

My feelings about the visit are beyond description. Back at home, I realized that my Turkish Cypriot friends had always been so near to me, about 15 kilometers, but in Cyprus I had not been allowed to see them or talk to them face to face.

Youth Promoting Peace

Nicoletta Michael (Nicosia)

On September 30, 2003, Greek and Turkish Cypriot teenagers came together for Cyprus Peace Day. Both Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots have their national days that they celebrate. When one side celebrates the other grieves. So we created a day at which we could both celebrate.

The following is part of the speech I made that day, as a representative of the program Youth Promoting Peace (Y2P). I and many Seeds of Peace are active in Y2P, and the President is Marios Antoniou, a Seed. Our goal is to bring peace in Cyprus through the creation of bridges of communication, cooperation and

friendship between the youth of the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities.

Adults often tell us that we youth cannot express our opinion about the Cyprus Problem because we didn't experience the war of 1974. Undoubtedly, they are both right and wrong; we weren't born then, and cannot know the experience of that war.

We Cypriot youth are victims of a different war. We are constantly bombarded with ideas from the media, our families, schools and societies—ideas that are nothing but the pain suffered by older generations. They brought us up in an unbalanced environment, causing hatred to be created. We are a new generation that doesn't accept things as they are. We want a change! Our aim is to break the wall our ancestors built between us, get to know the so-called "enemy," share our similarities and create friendships with unbreakable bonds.

Our vision is to lay the foundations for a better future, where we will live in a common country, with no limitations.

Like a New Country

Fezile Lakadamyali (Nicosia)

Many Cypriot teenagers and others learned that a solution between two sides is the best step for our future. They started to work for their countries' future and as the first result the border between North and South Cyprus has opened. We were so excited to see what we have lived next to for years but never seen before. When I first crossed the border, I felt a strange feeling that I have never felt in my life. The other side was like a new country for me. I walked around Nicosia with my family. The next day we went to Larnaca to get my identification card. With some friends of my sister from the South, we went to Lakadamia, where my father lived before 1963. Here my father saw his old house. He was so happy that it was not broken down.

We, all Cypriots, have made an effort for something and have started to receive the benefits. I hope in these coming months, there will be a complete solution between the two sides and peace in a united Cyprus.

Building Community in the Balkans

This summer, Balkan Seeds welcomed a President and set their minds and hands to the task of rebuilding their region

Pyramid of Progress

Mirkica Popovic (Skopje)

In Brezovica, Kosovo, Seeds from Kosovo, Macedonia and Serbia led a community-building day for local youth

At the summer workshop in Brezovica, Albanian, Kosovar, Serbian and Macedonian Seeds discussed identity issues, and conceived an idea for a multi-communal project. We came together for five days, each one filled with ten hours of sessions covering national, gender and personal identity. Every Seed created his or her own identity card, which clearly expressed needs and requirements so that each individual and the group as a whole could prosper. At the end of the day, the room was filled with needs on paper, resembling Maslow's pyramid, which lists human needs according to their importance and stage of development: physiological needs, security, belongingness, esteem and finally, self-actualization. Its developer, Abraham Maslow, remarked that a higher level could not be achieved unless lower needs were satisfied. Seeds of Peace coexistence sessions progress in a similar manner, starting chaotically but moving towards the development of constructive solutions to the problems we face.

We climbed the steps of the pyramid by asking what our actual group needs are. At the end, we developed a pilot project, aimed at healing wounds from the past and opening a door of new possibilities for, in our view, the most vulnerable group in the society—children and teenagers.

The four primary projects we imagined have one common point:

cultural exchange and education. Ideas included cook-outs of traditional food, theater, puppet and art workshops, and history and culture classes for the "other side." The aim was to educate people of others' culture and traditions, in order that they will understand the needs of their neighbors.

The final project idea is an art workshop for thirty children from primary schools in Belgrade, Pristina, Gjilani, Skopje, Tetovo and Tirana, in which the children will create art based on their personal feelings and representations of war and peace. Each delegation will exchange drawings with the others, for exhibition in the youth centers or schools that participate in the project. The goal will be to compare the visions of the different nationalities.

We decided to focus on children because we did not want these youth to have the lives we've had. Children are like young branches on a tree, easily bendable. Precisely because they are grasping everything around them, children can sometimes be valuable teachers. It's so common to hear teachers or parents commenting on a child's question they weren't able to answer. Their drawings can be a sharing, learning experience not only for the participants, but also for their friends, their families, and the Balkan population as a whole.

Grown up in Seeds

Dzemila Helac (Sarajevo)

In Savudrija, Croatia, Seeds from Bosnia, Croatia and Serbia studied the role of media

I was surprised when I was invited to go to Savudrija. Even though we were told that we are Seeds for life, I considered my camper career over and didn't expect a reunion. I cherished the opportunity to see the people I met in Seeds and shared so much with.

During the workshop we discussed the role of media in the Balkans. In my discussion group came up with hilarious articles when we reflected on how different newspapers cover the same events in totally different ways. It was even funnier when we drew the typical representations of a perfect/normal female or male in our societies.

The best part was making videos. We made a commercial for Seeds of Peace, and then made a video about something important that connected to us. My group made a video on how people isolate themselves, thinking they don't need

anybody and that they can hurt people just for fun. Gradually, they realize that's wrong and decide to change. It was in the form of hilarious skits, but the morals of the story remained serious. The week was full of work, but we did have time to relax, swim and sunbathe on the beach.

I had mixed feelings as we prepared to leave for home. For the first time, I didn't feel disappointed that we didn't "solve the world's problems." But I was worried about the future of our region and Balkan Seeds in Seeds of Peace. A lot of Seeds at the workshop said they felt isolated and too far away from the Seeds of Peace Center. Some felt we need more communication with other Balkan Seeds. I felt grown up, because I realized that I was not going to solve all the world's problems during a short seminar, but appreciated what we produced and the privilege of spending time with beautiful, strong and honest people.



Seeds enjoyed the majestic view at the Brezovica workshop



All photos courtesy of Marieke Van Woerkom

Over thirty Balkan Seeds participated in the workshop in Savudrija

Clinton in Kosovo

Erëblina Elezaj (Prishtina)

Former US President Bill Clinton met with Albanian, Serb and Roma Seeds of Peace in Prishtina, reflecting on his and their roles in the past and the future of Kosovo

I will always remember March 24, 1999, when President Bill Clinton spoke these words from the White House: "Peace is better than a long and unwinnable war... ending a tragedy is a moral imperative... we act to protect thousands of innocent people in Kosovo from a mounting military offensive... we care about saving innocent lives." That cold night, our electricity had been cut off. It was the feeling of being left in the middle of nowhere without a single hope, but then the light at the end of a tunnel shone and brought me back to life. President Clinton's words brought back the hope and life to thousands of people in Kosovo.

This summer, it sounded like a dream when I was informed that the Kosovar Seeds of Peace would be meeting President Clinton during his visit to Prishtina. On September 19, 2003, we, the Kosovar Seeds of Peace campers, met at the American University in Kosovo, shaking with excitement! Surrounded by crowds of people and hundreds of journalists, there he was, shaking everyone's hands. We all applauded and then shook hands.

Later, we personally met with him. There was President Clinton, right in front of me! After introductions, President Clinton told us he knew a lot about Seeds of Peace and asked about our future plans, and if we had started projects to plant seeds of peace in Balkan communities. We told how Seeds of Peace changed our lives, how it freed us from stereotypes, generalizations, prejudices and misjudgments, and raised our curiosity and patience to

hear others' stories. We also told him about the project that we Balkan Seeds are initiating in our community with photographs and children. He was glad to hear about it, and asked if we thought about sharing our experiences at Seeds of Peace and peace projects with older people.

You could see on people's faces that they were proud to be speaking with the President. The discussion went on for 45 minutes. Many of us thanked him for what he did for Kosovar Albanians; others talked about their fears, needs and the current situation in Kosovo. We were proud to represent our community there, but what was

amazing and important is that we were all proud to be Seeds of Peace, a community in itself. The discussion ended with photos, shaking hands, and sweet words from the President, such as "Good job," or "You are great." After everything was over, we followed him, yelling SEED, PEACE. The Presidential visit was transmitted in the media all over



President Bill Clinton with Balkan Seeds

Kosovo. The Seeds of Peace group was in all the broadcasts, and the representatives of all the ethnicities talked about their experience and their feelings about meeting the President.

President Clinton told Nelson Mandela after he was freed from jail. "It is important that we are able to forgive those we believe have wronged us, even as we ask for forgiveness from people we have wronged." I can only hope that our meeting with the President will help us fulfill this message.

Crossing the Divide

This past summer, Indian Seeds visited the homes of their friends in Pakistan. Over the course of a busy week, Seeds rekindled old friendships, saw the sights of Lahore, and surprisingly, found things don't seem so foreign across the border.

Two Countries, One Family

Shyam Kapadia (India)

They say that there are some things in life that you just can't forget. The four days I spent after crossing the border at Wagah to Pakistan was one of those things. I was in a country that is almost always at war, in some way or another, with my own. The moment I stepped across the white line that divided one people into two countries, I felt a surge of energy. The people I was looking at were supposed to be my enemies. Yet the Pakistani officer put us up in the diplomatic conference room so that we need not boil in the sun while they processed our passports, but all the while I kept thinking that he was part of the same organization that had killed thousands of my countrymen. It was with such mixed feelings that I began this unbelievable journey. We were welcomed very warmly by all the Pakistanis and their families, but more surprisingly, also by Pakistanis who were not associated with Seeds of Peace. They were all immensely happy to see us there. We spoke the same tongue, shared the same history, and, more or less, the same culture. Hence, it became even easier to talk to each other. One of our great experiences was the 2001 vs. 2002 Seeds cricket match. Even after giving the 2002 batch a few of our players, in the end 2001 reigned SUPREME. It was barely a few days after the festival of "Raksha Bandhan," (The Bond of Protection) and Aneeta had promised me that she would make me a "rakhi." A rakhi is a sacred thread that the sister ties on the brother's wrist and prays that God will always protect him. It also symbolizes the responsibility of the brother to take care of and protect his sister. So we decided that she would tie the rakhi on my wrist in a traditional ritual. After she tied it, I had to bow and touch her feet and then she had to put a 'tilak' (red mark) on my forehead.

I don't think I have ever enjoyed anything as much as the home stay visits in Pakistan. I can't wait until the Pakistanis

come here so we can show them our city with the same enthusiasm that they possessed in showing Lahore.

Aneeta Nagi (Pakistan)

In my life, I have hardly seen dreams become a reality, but the ones that I have are not dreams of people wanting to fly or touching the sky, but dreams of human conviction and passion. There was one vision that I, along with many other people, saw come to reality. We, the Indian and Pakistani Seeds, saw a common dream of seeing everyone together in one place. It was a miracle that ended with unforgettable memories!

In our region, iron gates and barbed wires separate our countries. The only direct route between the countries is the Delhi-Lahore bus service. Our Indian friends traveled from Bombay to Delhi, boarded the bus and stopped on the Indian side of the border (four kilometers away from Pakistan), and they walked the rest. They walked through gates, walked through the no man's land and entered territory they had been told to hate. It was a milestone and a victory for us; it hit us when we physically saw them that we finally did it! At last

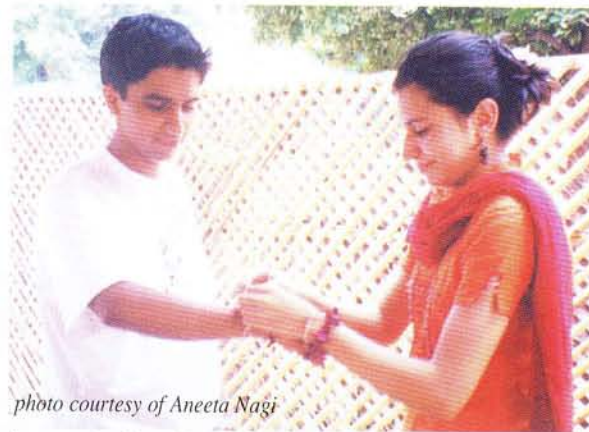


photo courtesy of Aneeta Nagi

Aneeta ties the rakhi, a sacred thread, around Shyam's wrist

we made a difference.

I remember in camp how beautiful life was when we all lived together and that same feeling came back during the home stays. It was just perfect. But when those four days ended, we realized how miserable we had become without our friends. Singing weird songs that no one had ever heard of, making up songs that no one could ever understand and playing cricket (the holiest game of the sub-continent!) in a most unruly way. One evening we visited the Badshahi mosque; Hindus and Muslims, Indians and Pakistanis, all in one mosque. It was an overwhelming evening. All of those times we spent with each, other both at camp and in Lahore, will always stay within our hearts and minds.

A Lasting Impression

Zoë Richards (Lahore)

Finally we saw a bus pulling in. Just as soon as the Indian Seeds got off, bulbs flashed. Photographers surrounded us, but even they were probably not prepared for what they saw. Tears flowed as the Pakistani Seeds met their Indian counterparts for the first time in ages. For some it was just a few months, but for others it was two years. It truly was emotional.

After a while, Janeen and Nergish, the two Indian seeds who were staying with me, loaded their bags into the car. My parents were absolutely delighted with the girls and my younger sister practically worshipped the two of them. They were a big hit with the family. I had known Janeen from camp and got to know Nergish much better.

Having Janeen and Nergish stay over was an experience I don't think I'll ever forget. We had some amazing moments. I still remember everything as if it happened just yesterday. I recall one day when some of my dad's friends were at our place, and Nergish kept them so involved with stories of hill stations in India and personal incidents, like how she always keeps a statue of the Laughing Buddha with her whenever she travels, that by the end of dinner they did not want her to leave. My little sister was amazed with Janeen. She followed her around and was so impressed by her that by the end of the week, she wanted to visit India to see Janeen.

I was not the only one who was sad the day the girls packed their bags. They left such an impact on my family and friends that everyone missed them when they left.



photo: Janeen Madan
Indian and Pakistani Seeds enjoy a night on the town in Lahore

Like Home

Parinaz Vakil (Mumbai)

As we drove into Pakistani territory, the similarity of the scenes on both sides of the border was striking. The vegetable vendors, the fields and the peeling paint on the houses made one forget that we were in a different country. At our destination, we were greeted with embraces and hugs; the atmosphere was electric as the host Seeds welcomed each of us to their homes.

On the first day we visited the Government College University, from which hail the two Nobel laureates of Pakistan. We also visited the Lahore Museum and the Trust School. The day wound up with dinner at the American Consulate. The first impressions we had of Lahore was that it was a beautiful city with wide roads and flourishing greenery. Pakistani food was scrumptious, and our Pakistani counterparts knew most of our Bollywood songs. August 14 was Pakistan's Independence Day and the majority of Lahore's citizens were out on the streets celebrating with fervor, and we took part in the festivities. Later, the Rotary Club hosted us and we spoke with the former Chief Justice of Pakistan. I also found the shopping to be like the Colaba Causeway in Mumbai, and we were surprised by special discounts offered to us as Indian visitors. On the last day we visited historical sites such as the Lahore Fort, the tomb of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the Gurudwara, the Minar-e-Pakistan, and the Badshahi Masjid. The similarities we noted were astounding. Partiality for spicy food, the passion for cricket, the warm hospitality and the similarity of language made us feel quite at home. There were some differences, however: women were rarely seen on the streets and the men were usually dressed in long kurtas. To those who look at such initiatives as 'idealistic and not pragmatic' peace efforts, the success of the visit conveyed unequivocally that despite tensions between nations, trans-border friendships can blossom, as they did with us.

Looking Back...To The Future

Ankit Gordhandas (Mumbai)

I was one of the lucky Indians who traveled on the Dosti Friendship Bus from Delhi to Lahore. This was a rare trip, because just a small fraction of Indians have ever gone to Pakistan. We went sightseeing in Lahore, made a lot of noise, had fun, and most importantly, we, for the first time, went to the "other side".

I discovered that Pakistanis are truly hospitable people. On reaching Pakistan, we were parched and the Pakistani border guards gave us cold water. Respecting my feelings, my host family prepared only vegetarian food during the whole week.

Before going to Pakistan, I had known quite a few things about the country, from the descriptions of my friends. But, when I actually reached there, I thought that I was still in India. I realized that India and Pakistan have much in common, like the food, the roads, the type of architecture, and yes the magic word, cricket. In addition, the people of both countries like the same Indian movies and the same type of songs. We even speak

the same languages, even though the script is different and they are called by different names, Urdu for Pakistanis and Hindi for Indians.

Before going to Pakistan, many of my friends, relatives and other people raised their eyebrows. Some advised me to "keep a low profile," others asked if I "thought it was safe," and some went to the extent of saying that I was going to an "enemy country," so I should be vigilant.

Now that I have returned from Pakistan, I wonder why many people in both countries have a stereotypical image about the other. I know so many people who haven't even seen a Pakistani, let alone know one, yet they say things about Pakistan, as if they have been to Pakistan umpteen numbers of times!

Today, I dream of the day when the Pakistani Seeds will be our guests, when we will show them around aamchi (our) Mumbai. When I look back at the wonderful time we had in Pakistan, I wonder whether I am looking back to the future?

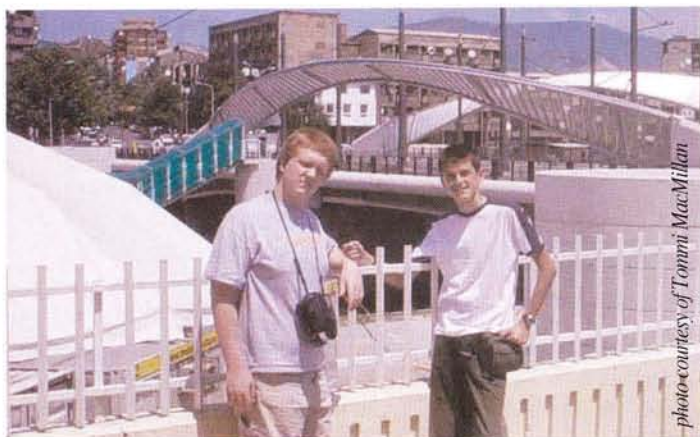
Charting New Territory in Maine

Each year, Maine Seeds go beyond the call of duty to build bridges with their neighbors in Maine and their fellow Seeds across the globe. Here, two Maine Seeds describe their experiences.

From Portland to Prishtina

Tommi McMillan (Portland)

By the time the third session of camp ended in 2002, I was ready to do more than learn about another culture or history; I wanted to experience it. I was armed with great insight but more importantly, trust and friendships that I made in Seeds of Peace. While most people my age dream of going to Florida with their families, I knew where I wanted to go: the Balkans. I entered the working world. I earned and saved enough money over eight months to take the trip of my dreams. After months of planning and waiting, I bought the tickets and flew out from Boston in June. This was my first time ever out of the USA. I arrived in Skopje, Macedonia and was greeted by one of my good friends, Besir Ceka. As we drove to Tetovo, a city an hour away from Skopje, I saw a world completely different than the one I had left in America. At Besir's house, I was greeted by his family and friends, a sign that I was truly welcomed there. In Macedonia, I went to school, sat in parks, and saw beautiful lakes and beautiful scenery.



Tommi and Kosovar Seed Rinor stand by the bridge dividing the town of Mitrovica

My next stop was Kosovo. At the border another of my friends came to pick me up. This friend opened his house to me for over two weeks. That night, another friend came and took me out. We walked downtown and talked. We went all over Kosovo. We went to Mitrovica one day. Mitrovica is a city that is divided by a bridge. It separates Serbs from Albanians and is guarded by international police officers. We watched cars pass on the bridge. We saw a tank cross the bridge with a French flag on it. Before I came to the Balkans, I had never even seen a tank in person. When we drove outside of Prishtina I saw bombed buildings and places that were just in disrepair. I

couldn't help but think, "What happened to the people that lived there?" I thought of the horror those people went through, and how no one had the will or the money to clean up many places. Many nights, no matter who I was staying with, we would stay up late and talk. We talked of history, of the current situation and of the future. I learned so much. Being on my own was amazing. But knowing I had such amazing friends, friends I made at Seeds of Peace, was so much better.

A Step in the Right Direction

Anthony McLeod (Portland)

This past summer, fourteen Maine Seeds were given the unique opportunity to identify, discuss, and confront the problems being faced by Maine's youth. The Portland Project, which has now expanded to other parts of Maine, seeks to build bridges between the various racial and cultural groups in the state of Maine. It started out as a project at Seeds camp, but now

"The experience is a huge step in the direction of empowering our state's youth"

continues throughout the year. As a group, we sought out the answers to many difficult questions that our elders have failed to address. Why are so many of our state's youth leaving the state and not coming back? Why has Maine continuously remained one of the "whitest states in America?" How can life be improved for the youth of our state? We wrote a charter focusing on an extremely wide range of controversial topics that affect our daily lives such as diversity, public housing, civil liberties, incentives to live in Maine, affirmative action, education, media, and a host of others. The writing process was a truly challenging experience with our diverse group of Seeds, each bringing different ideas of what the document should include. It was this challenge that motivated us to work even harder towards our common goal. Ultimately, the document proved to be a reflection of Maine Seeds as a whole, including all of our different ideals, emotions, values, personalities, cultures and hopes for a better future in Maine. The charter has been given to the governor of our state, John Baldacci, as well as to companies, schools and other groups of influence within our state's community. The experience is a huge step in the direction of empowering our state's youth and will be used as a tool by the Maine Seeds in their mission. Coming out of the experience, I cannot help but feel closer to the dynamic group of individuals with whom I laughed, struggled, and labored to produce this charter.

Our Children Ourselves

Parents of Israeli and Palestinian Seeds started dialogue groups to get to know each other and discuss the path to peace.

photo: Liat Marcus-Gross



Haifa parents, following in their children's footsteps

Our Children's Future

Azzam Dakkak (Jerusalem)

Can seeds grow in salty soil? If what is desired is a healthy plant, then we should first think of where and how we plant these seeds. The same thing applies to growing Seeds of Peace in a dark political atmosphere that hinders their growth. Despite the gloomy political situation that we as Palestinians live under, I decided with my wife to allow our son Ibrahim to participate in the efforts of peace by joining Seeds of Peace. My wife and I decided to participate in the parents' activities, hoping to bridge the gap between us and our neighbors. Our decision came out of our longing for a better future for our children and grandchildren. We believe that together we could start thinking of a new era in which we would live in peace, without prejudice and discrimination.

We still believe that peace will be only a dream unless we work hard for it. We also believe that peace will be a reality if we work to make it acceptable to individuals first and then to the whole society. This will happen when we start changing the common beliefs among people from both sides. We believe that we are all grandchildren of Abraham, and thus we are all equal in this land. No one has the right to terrorize the other under any excuse. The torture and humiliation of others should be stopped immediately.

The sessions we had at Seeds of Peace made us, the Palestinians, realize the fears of the Israelis as individuals and not as a government. I now have friends on the other side. While I may not agree with some of them on political issues, there are common views among all of us on the future of our children and grandchildren.

Time is running short and there is plenty of work to do. We should work out of deep belief on changing attitudes and think sincerely for a better future. If the existence of one state for the two nations is very hard to achieve now, let us then work on two states that will live side by side with normal relations. My family and I will always support any effort for establishing a fair and just peace that is based on equality between the two nations. I sincerely believe in my people's right for a fair and just solution that will guarantee an independent state. I also believe in the right of Israel to exist as a state according to all resolutions issued by the United Nations. I know that I have the full support of all those who believe in peace all over the world.

Rare Relationships

Ronit Bogler (Haifa)

In May 2003, we began a discussion group for parents of Seeds. This group embodied two basic characteristics: one, it was for Haifa residents, and two, we all came with the belief that we want to "give peace a chance."

Getting to know each other was a gradual process, which started with introductions and sharing the rationale behind everyone's decisions to join the group. We agreed that the purpose of our gathering was not "because of the kids," but rather because we wanted to explore this channel of communication among ourselves. From the beginning, we realized that whether our children are active in Seeds of Peace or not, we were motivated to find out together what benefit we could bring to ourselves as a group, to the community, and maybe even to society as a whole. I think that we all share one common feeling — we love to meet and converse with each other every six weeks.

After going through one of our "warm-up" sessions, we have come to a point where our mediators decided to present us with harsh dilemmas: each of us was asked to define and rank the components of our identity according to our perceptions of what is most important to us. We had to reveal our personal "identification card," as we perceive it. After hearing each one in the group, we found out that some religious and nationalistic definitions that may be basic and logical to one group of people may be perceived as "confusing" or even "threatening" to another group. Though the "identity list" included what many considered to be "objective" and "value-free" adjectives (like nationality characteristics), it appeared that in reality, almost every identification component has some value to it. Those who live in areas of conflict have probably experienced these ambivalent feelings during honest conversations with "the other." Now, it's our role to deal with the consequences of this revealing finding.

Since we formed our group and have discussed the more sensitive and explosive questions and dilemmas, our friendships have strengthened. I feel that the more I hear and argue about the conflicting subjects that brought our people, Arabs and Jews, to sad and difficult times, the more anxious I am to meet my new friends again and continue our talk. I didn't imagine that in such a short time I'd make such good friends with people whom I can share my thoughts and feelings about our future. I know that this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship that will continue to be tested in future challenges, such as defining our goals and vision and striving to fulfill them.

Security or Suffering?

■ As violent conflict continues between Israelis and Palestinians, the Israeli government is building a wall to separate Israeli and Palestinian populations. Seeds present opinions on all sides of the wall ■

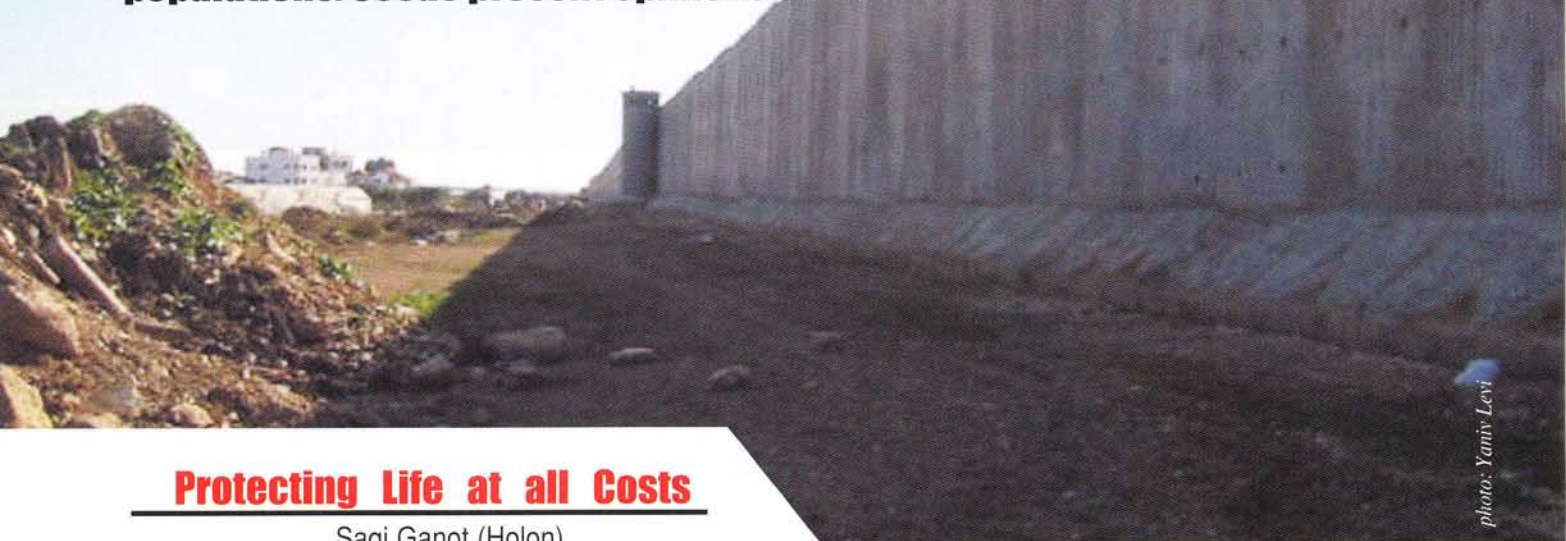


photo: Yaniv Levi

Protecting Life at all Costs

Sagi Ganot (Holon)

Lately it has been fashionable among prominent news sources all over the world to attack everything Israel does. I would be the first one to agree that the current Israeli policy has led us nowhere for three years, but I feel obligated to clarify some things. Contrary to many people's beliefs, the large majority of Israelis would agree to a solution that would include Israeli withdrawal from the most of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, as numerous opinion polls have shown. However, they hold the belief that a unilateral withdrawal will bring a new wave of terrorist attacks, and that Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's actions since 1993 have proven he doesn't really want an agreement. As long as Hamas and Islamic Jihad cells are working furiously to produce more attacks, most Israelis will believe that there is justification for our army to remain in Palestinian-populated areas. However, seeing that three years of army actions haven't reduced the organizations' resolve to plan more attacks, public support in Israel for a security fence separating Israel proper from the Palestinian areas grew. Its efficiency has not been doubted by any considerable number of people, as the current fence that stretches along the border of the Gaza Strip has proved its usefulness in preventing terror attacks for many years, and the small section of the West Bank fence that now exists in the northern Samaria region has, according to Maariv newspaper, succeeded in reducing the number of Israelis killed and injured by attacks in the adjacent area by thousands of percents.

I am opposed to the currently proposed route of the fence, since it would have been less damaging to the Palestinian population if the government did not build the fence around West Bank settlements. But I and the overwhelming majority of Israelis do not agree to allow the killing of Israelis to continue because there is no fence. With the fence, not only will there be less Israeli casualties, but there will be less justification for

the IDF to act in Palestinian territory, so both sides will benefit eventually.

The separation fence is not the Berlin Wall that divided a single people based on their political affiliation. It is not an act of apartheid, a racist tool to perpetuate one people's dominance over another. It is a barrier meant to protect life, at any cost.

Not the First Fence

Guy Eisenkot (Herzliya)

When I think about the wall, I am reminded of a story that occurred this past summer, a few weeks after we got back from camp. We had just met a group of Canadian visitors in the Seeds of Peace Center in Jerusalem, and it was time to go home. Jen Marlowe, the Program Director, called us a taxi. Our driver, a Ramallah resident, was in a big hurry, saying, "If I don't get back to Ramallah before 8:00 P.M. I'll be sleeping in the car tonight." He continued, "Like those checkpoints aren't enough — they are now building this big wall in my backyard."

This man was inconvenienced, and his complaint showed that this wall will not only separate Israelis and Palestinians; it will also separate one side of a village from the other, children from their schools, farmers from their land and more. But with that said, it will hopefully separate the bomber from the bus.

Israel has built fences before — it built a security fence in the northern border with Lebanon back in the 1970s, after numerous attacks on villages near the border. The fence extended many kilometers and some parts were built on Lebanese territory. In 1999, when Israel decided to withdraw its forces from southern Lebanon, dismantling the fences was not a problem, and nearly all the Lebanese territories were returned. Although imperfectly, the past has shown that the wall shouldn't and wouldn't be a stumbling block to a solution.

Intention: Confinement

Fadi El-Salameen (Hebron)

Since the "Road Map" peace plan was announced, the Israeli government has been speaking about its desire for peace with the Palestinians. Yet the Palestinian people have seen nothing but a will to control every Palestinian and to eradicate any semblance of a Palestinian entity. The wall, which will make it impossible for Palestinians to establish a state, seems a clear sign that the Israeli government's real intentions are to place the Palestinians in tight confinement. The least one can say about the separation wall is that it is making people's lives miserable. In the city of Qalqilya, where the wall is almost complete, 40,000 residents can enter or leave the city from only one electronic gate. If, for some reason, the address written on the ID card mentions a different city than Qalqilya, people are automatically denied entry—even if they are visiting family. Since when did this kind of policy

become acceptable? This is happening in Qalqilya, soon in Tulkarem, and eventually every other Palestinian city. My family live in a village south of Hebron. They tell me that the Israeli government has issued warnings to several families that their houses will be demolished and their land confiscated to make space for the separation wall.

The wall will divide my town, like many others, into two parts: empty land, for Israelis, and a confined space for Palestinians. If we are lucky, we will get an electronic gate to enter and exit. People have started looking for housing in different areas. This policy is making Palestinians feel crowded beyond anything we've experienced before. I do not see how President Bush's vision of a Palestinian state, outlined in the Road Map, will be possible with this wall standing in its way.



The New Berlin Wall

Lena Kharouf (Jerusalem)

Forty years ago, the Berlin wall was constructed. Now, as the world continues to celebrate the fall of the last symbol of hatred and forced separation of people, another wall is being constructed by Israel, but this one is a lot longer and a lot higher. This wall will extend 720 kilometers and be eight meters tall. However, this is only the first stage and it is not clear what will come next. Contrary to the Israeli claim that this is a "security fence," it is in fact a major land grab, for at least 300,000 Palestinians will be affected by land confiscation, razing of agricultural land and the demolition of homes and community infrastructure.

Not only does this wall separate both nations from each other, but it also kills the roots of peace. Palestinians won't be able to escape these

cages before getting Israeli permission.

Who would imagine moving in his own country only with permission? Who would think to be surrounded by doors and walls and not being able to see his family or friends who live only a couple of meters away? It's like an eternal curfew. I can't believe that we are in 2004 — the age of technology and development — and we are still living in small ghettos. We all know that a lot of Palestinians and Israelis have paid their lives for the cause of peace. Violence never brings peace, therefore we should all, from both sides, unite and struggle for our survival and freedom. As Seeds, I hope one day we can achieve progress in the peace process and overcome all the difficulties that face us.

Witness to the Wall

Yaniv Levi (Oranit)

Ilive in Oranit, a small Israeli town that is on the "green line," the pre-1967 border. The area in which I live has been a quiet zone, even during the Intifada, where Israeli and Arab neighbors respect each other. From my backyard today, I can see the separation fence being built. As it looks to me, the fence is not going to help anything, except to create more hate between Israelis and Palestinians. The fence separates villagers from their lands and fields, people from their food!

I have decided to produce a documentary film about the fence, in which I will interview Israelis and Palestinians about the fence and its consequences. During my research, I have discovered that the separation fence has already cost over 4 billion shekels (approximately US \$1 billion), and the end of the construction is far away. In the end, it will cost more than 35 billion shekels (\$8.5 billion). The fence will be over 700 kilometers long, with only 6 checkpoints between the two parts. More than 10,000 soldiers and policemen will stand guard. Most important, more than 360,000 Palestinians will end up on the Israeli side and 20,000 settlers on the Palestinian side.

"The Thing," as one commentator has called it, is in fact

part-wall, part-fence. Most of it is a concrete base with a five-meter-high wire-and-mesh superstructure. Rolls of razor wire and a four-meter-deep ditch are placed on one side. In addition, the structure is fitted with electronic sensors and has an earth-covered "trace road" beside it where footprints of anyone crossing can be seen. About 8.5 kilometers of the structure consists of an eight-meter-high solid concrete wall, complete with massive watchtowers. This solid section is conceived as a "sniper wall" to prevent gun attacks against Israeli motorists on the nearby Trans-Israel Highway.

The story of the fence is as winding and full of contradictions as the fence itself. In early 2001, the US administration did not oppose the Israeli government's decision, under Prime Minister Ehud Barak, to start building the fence along the Green Line. After elections, new Prime Minister Ariel Sharon continued building, but cutting into the West Bank. Today the fence is a process that no one can stop, even President Bush, who now opposes the fence.

In my opinion, putting this wall between people is not going to stop anything, except the hope that some people still have of a better future.

Too Close to Home

Seeds of Peace from Israel, Palestine and Turkey recount their experiences of violence striking where they should be safe and sound

Double Jeopardy

Eias Khatib (Jerusalem)

Many people think that bus bombings only affect victims of terror and their families. My experience has been different. My family and I are the only Arabs who live in Ma'alot Dafna, a religious Jewish neighborhood in Jerusalem. My grandfather built our house and my father will never leave it. People have offered my father a blank check just to leave the neighborhood, but my father says, "I will die before I leave my home." So, because of who we are and where we live, bombings have a double effect on us.



In mid-August 2003, the number 2 bus, which leaves from the Western Wall exploded right next to my house and killed many people. I was at home and heard the blast. I went to the roof of my house and saw the remains of the bus and the people who had been inside it. Some were alive, some were dead and there was blood everywhere. My older brother called and told me to get everyone in the house, and lock the doors and windows.

We were all frightened—both that one day, one of us will be on the bus that explodes—and frightened of the misplaced anger of our Israeli neighbors. My family and I stayed inside, afraid to leave our house. Outside, we heard people shouting and cursing at us. The sound of the sirens mixed in with the cursing of our neighbors. The next day, we found out that one woman from our neighborhood had been killed in the bombing. People continued to shout "death to the Arabs" toward me and my family.

This wasn't the first time being the Arab family on the block has caused us problems. During the first intifada, people threw rocks at our house. When we called the Israeli police, they would not help us, because we are Arabs. In this intifada, people threw stones at my brother, and the police would not help him once again. My friend Ramzi and I were attacked at knifepoint by a group of teenagers, when we were playing basketball. I didn't call the police that time.

While these are examples of how tough it is to live in this neighborhood, I do have some religious Jewish friends. During the Jewish holiday of Sukkot, my friend invited me to his family's sukkah for dinner. Some Jewish friends in the neighborhood say they want to "get rid of the Arabs, but you can stay." In general though, friends in the neighborhood are the exceptions rather than the rule.

The neighborhood definitely causes problems. My father has to fight the municipality for the right to build a small addition on our house, and I have to live being different from all my neighbors. But in all honesty, it doesn't bother me to live there. It's a plus that I live close to the Seeds of Peace Center. Living in Ma'alot Dafna

means I deal with the realities of coexistence, and the lack of coexistence, on a daily basis, not just when I participate in programs at Seeds of Peace.

Lucky to be Alive

Maya Harish (Jerusalem)

On September 9, 2003, my best friend finished his army training. We, his friends and family, went to a big ceremony where the new soldiers get sworn in to protect the country and serve it well. When we got there, my mother called me to ask if I was all right. There had been a terror attack on soldiers at a bus stop close by. I told her we were all fine.

When we got back to Jerusalem, we decided we to go out. Our parents asked us not to go to town. But we are all old timers in Jerusalem, and thought we know enough about bombings. We figured there won't be two bombings in the same day and, aside from that, we would not go to the city center. We all promised our parents to sit only in a café where there is a security guard at the entrance, and to sit as far inside as possible.

We got to the German Colony neighborhood and a friend of mine suggested we go to Café Hillel. We were driving past it. I told her I hate the place. I managed to convince my friends it was a bad idea, and we drove on. We parked, got out, walked back to the main street and heard a huge explosion that is still ringing in my ears.

Someone give me the power to do something to stop this ridiculous blood festival that is hurting us all

We had no idea what happened. I had a moment of clarity. I decided we all have to call home now, because the cell phone lines will be dead within minutes. We all phoned home, while police cars and ambulances flashed past us. We didn't really want to see, but there it was. All the ambulances stopped at Café Hillel.

So I am alive.

When it sank in, we went crazy. We understood we had to get the hell away from there, but no one could figure out where or how. I knew someone who lives nearby, and figured we should go there. At first, we couldn't cross the road, because of ambulances rushing by and screaming people. We froze stiff from fear when we thought there may be another suicide bomber around. We ran like crazy trying to get to my friend's house. We got there, only to discover he wasn't there—he had gone to help remove the victims.

We stood outside the door, all crying to the background music of the ambulances.

I still can't think clearly. That night was a sleepless night for me. That night was a sleepless night for my mother. The next night was a sleepless night for many Palestinians, due to the retaliation. Please tell me how it is possible that our friends are dying right in front of us. How is it possible that seventeen year olds cry themselves to sleep? How is it that we let this happen? I have lost friends in this war. I do not want to lose any more. I feel useless. Somewhere along the road, someone gave me the power to do something about this, to stop this ridiculous blood festival that is hurting us all. But I lost control. Is it my fault for not trying hard enough, for not putting 100% of me into the struggle to free us all?

Invading my House

Reem Yusuf (Ramallah)

Shortly after returning from camp this summer, I was sleeping in my house when my mum woke me up at 3:00 A.M. and told me to come outside. I looked around in the darkness, unable to see two Israeli soldiers who were half-hidden by the inner wall of my house. Outside, I saw my brother sitting on the corner and my dad being questioned by two soldiers. I, my mum and my young sister were ordered to sit in front of the two soldiers, who pointed their guns at us. It was a chilly night. One soldier told my mum not to worry, because the soldiers had come to investigate my father, a university professor who teaches in Bir Zeit University near Ramallah, and at Beit Berl College in Israel.

I decided to try and talk to one of the soldiers. I got up and went toward him, not thinking of the trouble I could bring myself. I said, "I think what you're doing is wrong!" He said, "What am I doing?" I replied, "Coming inside our houses and waking us all up for nothing at 3:20 am. This is not right. Do you know what I did this summer? Yeah, I am a member of Seeds of Peace and now you're . . ."

He didn't let me continue my words. "If you're tired," he said, "I give you permission, only you, to go and sleep, so go, you don't need to tell me about that thing of yours. Sleep." I didn't accept what he offered. After a while, the Israeli soldiers decided to break into our neighbor's home, for they banged on their doors but no one replied. I felt scared and confused, just sitting there and watching. Fortunately, my dad convinced the soldiers he could get a response from our neighbors without resorting to destruction. We phoned our neighbors and woke them up. They were ordered to come to our house. Men stayed outside for questions and women and babies were allowed to go inside.

I felt useless. I didn't know what to do after being interrupted when trying to talk. All I could think of was my computer, and so



in front of the soldiers and the neighbors I sat on my computer and started telling the world what was happening at that moment. They saw me, but I gave them looks! I wrote a letter to all the Seeds in the world at 4:30 A.M. while the soldiers were still at my house. I can't deny how intense it was. I felt courageous writing that letter in front of their eyes, because it was about them and the way they were treating us.

Terror in Turkey

Rina Onur (Istanbul)

I never felt a threat against my life. The feeling is new to me. As a Seed saying this, it is odd, but I have never experienced terrorism, death, violence and hatred. I never went through something called a suicide bombing. Until now.



In November two synagogues in my city, Istanbul, were bombed by suicide bombers driving two trucks filled with explosives and burning materials. Forty people died and over 300 people were injured, mostly burned to death. A British bank, HSBC, was bombed during early rush hour. The building is in front of one of the biggest, newest trade/shopping centers in Istanbul. It is also the hub of subway entrances. The British embassy in the most crowded place of Istanbul was also bombed. Twenty-seven people died and 450 were injured. The scene was the most horrible thing I've ever seen. All the things I watched on TV about September 11 or suicide bombings in Middle East seemed just the same, no different. I watched the bodies without arms, legs, pieces with a strange ease. I heard the bombings at school like two loud strikes of lightning.

In the first bombing, my grandparent's house was damaged. Their house is two blocks behind one of the synagogues. My grandfather could have been in the street during the explosion. My friend's mother was in the embassy during the explosion, but survived somehow. Our headmaster's daughters were in the explosion. People I know, so close, so near.

My house is in the middle of a dangerous triangle right now, between the Israeli embassy, a big synagogue, and the biggest trade/shopping complex in Turkey. My house is two minutes away from the only American school in Istanbul. There is an American flag in my school right next to the Turkish flag.

I have never seen such paranoia in Istanbul. People fearing to go out. Schools cancelled. Never have I felt so endangered, but I understand that we have to go on with our lives. I ask myself, why did this have to happen at all? Is it a protest against the war in Iraq, that we didn't participate or that we did? Why? Why? Why so close after all? Thank God, everybody in my family, all the Seeds in Turkey are safe. The phone keeps ringing and people from all over the world, people I haven't seen for ages keep calling. I tell them I'm OK, but until when? When will be the next attack and where? I guess I can't escape, right?

Coexistence Hotline

The author of this letter faces a dilemma. He wrote to The Olive Branch, and we asked you to provide guidance

Duty and Humanity

I started military service in August 2001, and was supposed to take an officer training course. But, things in the army rarely work out as expected. Instead, whether I wanted to or not, I found myself a combat soldier with a lack of training. This was obviously hard. But soldiers cannot impose their own opinions. In a democracy, citizens have to follow the decisions made by the elected government, even if they didn't vote for it.

One's duty is tested daily in the army, especially where there may be hostile activity. Yes, sometimes you have to shoot or be shot, but there are laws on how to use your weapon. I would never use it unless there was a real danger to my life or others. I know checkpoints create difficulties for innocent people, but I believe they help prevent attacks, so they are necessary during a time when there are attempts every day to attack Israeli civilians.

What would happen if I did not serve? Someone else would go in my place, and they will not be from Seeds of Peace. They may not respect Palestinians the way I do. I was lucky to get a chance to make a difference, making sure my unit treated Palestinian civilians with dignity, as human beings. Every day I remembered the faces of my Palestinian friends. As Seeds, I believe we have to fight to improve things within the systems of our societies. That's what I did.

Coming to Seeds of Peace meetings was impossible for a while. Emails and Seedsnet became a drill for me every weekend free. Visiting the Seeds Center whenever possible became my way to keep in touch.

Eldad Levy (Kiryat Gat)

Serving My Conscience

I didn't go to the army. Six months ago I got an exemption, based on my conscientious objection to all forms of violence. I got out of "obligatory" army service, and I don't regret it. I enrolled in National Service, where I volunteer in an organization called "Green Action" for ecological social change. This is my alternative to being a soldier. I don't wear a uniform, I don't hold a weapon, I don't get orders and most important, I contribute to the society in a nonviolent and constructive way.

I don't judge people who chose to go to the army. But I do think that although it is obligatory, people here have to choose whether to go or not, and take responsibility for the consequences. It's up to Israeli youth, currently forced to "stand in line" and be another number in this violent system, to decide whether to participate or not. Going to the army means

postponing your identity, thoughts and views for two or three years, and meanwhile letting the military tell you exactly what to do. We can oppose it, and I strongly suggest we start today.

Noya Kokhavi (Mevasseret Zion)

It's Also Your Decision

Most soldiers in the IDF aren't combat soldiers and their duty does not include shooting anyone. Some of your friends may serve in the West Bank or Gaza, but in most cases the army doesn't prevent meeting your friends from

Seeds of Peace.

As an officer who's completed two years of service, I managed to keep my connection with SOP and I found time to join in activities. I met Palestinians and spoke with them with no fear.

I recommend watching the film "Peace of Mind," which portrays the relationship of Seeds from opposite sides. The Seeds who took part in this movie a few years ago have completed their army service. Seeing them sit together recently, after three years of surviving the intifada, some as combat soldiers, I realized nothing can erase what they learned at Seeds of Peace. They treated their friends just the same.

The Israeli Seeds are required to serve their country. The future of your friendship with them is in your hands. You'll be the one to choose to distance yourself or to

keep in touch and remind them that as hard as the situation is, there is someone from the other side to talk to. Good Luck!

Inbal Shaked (Bet Aryeh)

True Character

I recently finished my army service. Let me assure you, I didn't grow red horns and a tail, I wasn't overwhelmed by the power I received by joining the army and I kept the same infantile sense of humor. So, we are the same people when it comes to character. Trust me, being a soldier in the West Bank is not easy for a lot of people even if they are not Seeds of Peace. I am proud that I didn't lose my integrity and my morals during my service. I did not have the bad luck of meeting a person in violent circumstances, but I will tell you, so as not to hide behind a vague declaration, that I will never shoot at an innocent person. It doesn't matter that I am a Seed or no. If I do encounter a person who is threatening me, fellow soldiers or civilians, I will not hesitate to stop him. I believe that the majority of Seeds are moral and no matter what nationality they are, will always use their head and heart wherever they go and whatever they do.

Yossi Zilberman (Kiryat Gat)

THE POWER OF ONE

A speech by one young leader, inspired by his first meeting ever with a Seed from "the other side." It's about the difference that you can make.

My seventeen-year-old son, Etan Newman, was a participant this past summer on the Ramah Israel Seminar. As part of their program, he and his friends met with Israeli and Palestinian teenagers in the Seeds of Peace Center in Jerusalem. Etan, who is now regional president of United Synagogue Youth, his Jewish youth group, gave the enclosed speech at a gathering of 400 USYers. Since it relates to Seeds of Peace, I thought you might want to read it. With admiration,

Louis Newman (Mendota, Minnesota)

"I don't want to talk to you tonight about politics. I don't want to talk about borders or refugees, left wing or right wing, Labor or Likud, bombings or retaliations. Instead, I want to talk about hope. I want to tell you about a girl I met, and the new perspective she gave me. I want to talk about peace.

Four months ago, my group on Ramah Israel Seminar took a short bus ride to a house overlooking Jerusalem. We anxiously walked up the stairs and took our seats in a small room. Standing before us were six kids. They proceeded to tell us their stories. Some told of death, others of fear, some of the past, most of the future. All spoke of understanding. Standing before me were three Israelis and three Palestinians, six friends, six members of Seeds of Peace.

I didn't know what to think. Israel has always been an integral part of my life, and my Judaism. These past three years I have watched with horror, day in and day out, as fellow Jews are murdered by suicide bombings. I have never stopped believing in the necessity of a Jewish homeland, in the need for us to defend and support the people of Israel. Wasn't I supposed to be outraged that these Palestinians would speak to me as if I should support them, even care about them? Why would Israelis who had suffered through this bloody Intifada stand side by side with their enemies?

As I thought through these questions, we were broken up into groups. I happened to sit next to a 15-year old Palestinian girl, clad in jeans and a sweatshirt. She lived in East Jerusalem, went to a Palestinian school, had grown up surrounded by Palestinian ideas and slogans. And yet, she was so similar. I couldn't help but engage her in conversation about my life, and about hers. As the discussion ended, even those members of my small group who had come ready to argue politics could not help asking for her email address. I felt that I had gotten to know a sweet girl, a girl who happened to be on the opposite side of this age-long conflict. 'One last thing,' she said as we were getting up to leave. 'I know you have suffered. And I know I have suffered. If only we could see each other as people, who suffer every day in violence, we might be able to build a world where we could live side by side, in peace.'

All of a sudden it hit me. She was right. Forget politics or borders or military strategy. Forget issues of a Palestinian state, of Temple Mount control, of refugees' right of return. We are all God's creatures. The girl sitting next to me, a Palestinian, was also a person, with the same fears, goals, and desires that I have. Seeds

of Peace had taught her not to let her views on the conflict prevent her from looking into the eyes of the other. Shouldn't I be able to look back?

We are taught in the Book of Proverbs, '*Binpol Oyveicha Al Tismach*-In the downfall of your enemy, do not rejoice.' For this reason God reprimanded the dancing Israelites as the Egyptians drowned in the Red Sea; for this reason we take a drop of wine out of our cup as we recite the plagues at the Passover seder meal. And now, as the violence continues in Israel, it is this lesson from the Torah that we must remember. Our enemies too are human, made

That Palestinian girl, the first I ever met, taught me that it is possible to live together, that she is not a distant enemy, but a human being...that before politics, we must have respect.

in the image of God. If we can see each other simply as people, all suffering and all dying, then perhaps we can begin to move towards peace.

Don't get me wrong. I am not so naïve as to believe that every Palestinian sees me as a person, deserving of respect and life and love. I am not so foolish to suggest that Israel should not use her power to defend herself. On the contrary, the IDF has the right and the responsibility to ensure that Israeli citizens are able to live without fear of violence. I would never, ever disregard the tragic stories of so many Jews who have lost their lives. But, indeed, what I saw in the eyes of the Palestinian girl next to me was the need to sit down and tell each other our stories. I believe that we will only be able to solve the political conflict, only be able to achieve the secure and peaceful Israel that we desire, if each sees the other side as human. This challenge, to truly try to understand our enemies, is a great one. But the opportunity, the potential, is what gives me hope for peace.

That Palestinian girl, the first I had ever met, taught me that it is possible to live together. She taught me that she is not a distant enemy, but a real human being. She taught me that before politics we must have respect. But most of all, she taught me that the hope is not yet lost. As the song says, '*Od yavo shalom aleinu v'al kulam*.' I pray that peace will still come for us, and for everyone in the world.

Etan Newman (Mendota, Minnesota)



Peace is more than

Peace is more than the absence of war. True peace is justice, freedom, the recognition of human rights.

So it is with nations, so it can be within each of us.

I will be at peace when I tender justice to others, and when others are just with me.

I will at peace when I yield freedom to others, and when others free me.

I will be at peace when I recognize the rights of others, and when others value my rights as highly as theirs.

I need not look for peace.

Peace will find me when I seek it for others.

Hiba Taha (Jerusalem)