I WANT TO SEND A MESSAGE

Edited by Annie Jacobs

with a preface and essay by Daniel Noah Moses

A project of Seeds of Peace Educator Programs

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Preface

by Daniel Noah Moses

Each night before bed, my great-aunt Sophie took the teeth from her mouth and put them in a glass.

When I was a child I spent my summers at a bungalow colony in the Catskill Mountains with my grandmother and two of her sisters. I shared a room with my great-aunt Sophie. The oldest of ten brothers and sisters, she was born in what is now Belarus, somewhere around 1900, in a world without cars, refrigerators, nuclear bombs, televisions, airplanes, or fear of climate change. There was no iconic photograph of our blue planet from outer space. There was no Internet. People in places without orange trees did not drink orange juice all year round. An iceman delivered ice. They ate mostly what was local and in season. They hovered by the stove in winter and died of diseases that we now easily cure. Even as a child I struggled to imagine what she told me each night, while getting ready for bed — about her life, about the family, the migrations, the tumult, the radical flux, the gulf between the world that she was born into and the one I took for granted — as she took out her teeth, carefully put them in a glass, covered her mouth, finished her last reflections, and turned out the light.

When Sophie was growing up the old people around her had been born in the middle of the nineteenth century, in an environment that we know from Russian novels. She must have interacted with wrinkled villagers who had once been serfs (her grandfather worked for a landowning aristocrat). When the teenagers of today are as old as Sophie was when I knew her they will tell stories to children in a future that we can barely imagine. It might be a post-apocalyptic nightmare; perhaps we will be pleasantly surprised.

I follow the headlines about the conflicts that rage around us. I live in Jerusalem. I work with Seeds of Peace. I visit schools. I visit colleagues and friends in homes, offices, community centers, coffee shops. The headlines can be distracting. It is easy to focus on the thorns and nettles that inflict us while the ground shakes underneath.

I visit a dean at Al Quds University, outside of Jerusalem. An elegant Palestinian man in his early sixties, he takes me out to his balcony. "When I was a child, "he says, motioning with his hands, "I walked these hills. I worked for my uncles, who owned thousands of sheep. All that you see in front of you was wide open land." Now I see rows upon rows of apartment blocks made from pale Jerusalem stone. Later this man explains that he is trying to understand his grandchildren in California. He still kisses the hand of his older brother; his grandchildren sometimes call their mother by her first name. When he was a boy, the men sat in a circle and recited Arabic poetry by heart; his grandchildren are more comfortable with hip-hop. "Old ways are vanishing," he says, "and my family has scattered."

Sandy, an Israeli teacher, speaks with such depth, pride and sadness, while we sit on a bus on the way to a workshop in Tel Aviv. He points with his slender wrinkled hand to where the orange orchards used to stretch out in all directions and where now there are rows of glittering new apartment blocks. "Close my eyes," he says, "I smell oranges."

I walk with an elderly professor of German and Yiddish literature past four undergraduate students as they study for a large introductory class about the Holo-

caust held in an air-conditioned room with stadium seating. The professor shakes his head. Born in Vienna, he and his brother were sent off to England as teenagers in the late 1930s and survived. The rest of their family became part of those statistics of death: mounds of ash; cakes of soap; whole worlds of experience, as real and solid as our own; individual human beings who left behind eyeglasses and shoes; unfinished stories; unexpressed loves; shards of memory; old photographs.

I sit in the El Arub refugee camp on the road to Hebron listening to stories of where my Palestinian friends or their parents and grandparents are from in what is now the state of Israel. The grandchildren say that they are from the village of their grandparents—a village that no longer exists.

There are fundamental, critical, differences, and I'm not trying to compare. These differences matter deeply. At the same time, whole worlds of individual human beings, as real and solid as our own, with cherished homes, farms, shops, work sheds, cemeteries, are now covered by national parks and shopping malls frequented by people who don't remember those who, with their children and grandchildren, remain suffering, disempowered and displaced.

I travel with a Jordanian friend whose parents are both Palestinian refugees to the place between Haifa and Nazareth where her mother's village used to be. On a hill by a gas station we find decaying tombstones and neglected orchards of fruit trees.

I have an Israeli friend in her 70s who was born and grew up in Egypt. She recently returned to Cairo and walked her childhood haunts. "I finally took what I wanted," she said, "and left the rest behind."

On a wintry day in Portland Maine, you will find Somali and Darfuri mothers walking across the street in somber hijab. You will find them with their children walking through the aisles of the local Walmart. It is not difficult—in a state where French Canadians were until recently the most visible minority—to have a goat slaughtered according to Islamic law.

Faten, the grandmother of my friend Manal, grew up in an Arab village in what is now the north of Israel. At the funeral of her aunt, Faten's father said to the widower (his brother-in-law), you have lost my sister so I will give you my daughter. Faten was then 14. Meanwhile, Manal's 16 year old daughter reads Harry Potter and poetry in English and is comfortable with American slang; she texts on her smart phone; this summer she is going to an exchange program at a private school in Massachusetts. This girl lives five minutes by foot from her still vigorous great-grandmother.

How many of us, how many of our parents, grandparents, and great-parents have come from somewhere else? They packed. They said goodbye. They broke from one world and jumped into the new. Or they were pushed. They brought recipes, rituals, habits, stories. They learned to adapt. How easily homes can change hands or be demolished. And even the headstones of cherished loved ones in cemeteries become hard to read and go back to being just stone.

What distances covered while staying in one place. The parents of Deepa, an Indian Seeds of Peace educator, married across caste lines. From the perspective of her mother's high caste family, eating with her father (born into a low caste) would cause contamination. Throughout her childhood, when visiting her mother's side of the family, her father took his meals at a separate table.

Because of clumsy categories of "them" and "us," we individual human beings lose

sight of other individual human beings. We draw and redraw the lines around us. We draw the lines that surround us. We draw lines that turn into walls.

Armenians look from Yerevan across the Turkish border at Mount Ararat and yearn for what they consider theirs. The wars that rage now in Syria and Iraq are fought in states cobbled together from the ruins of the Ottoman Empire. The Zionist pioneers came from states—the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Russian Empire—that have since vanished. Those lines on the map are only lines on the map. The Raj (British India). India. Pakistan. Bangladesh. When I was growing up, the Soviet Union was a real place. When Sophie was growing up, it did not yet exist.

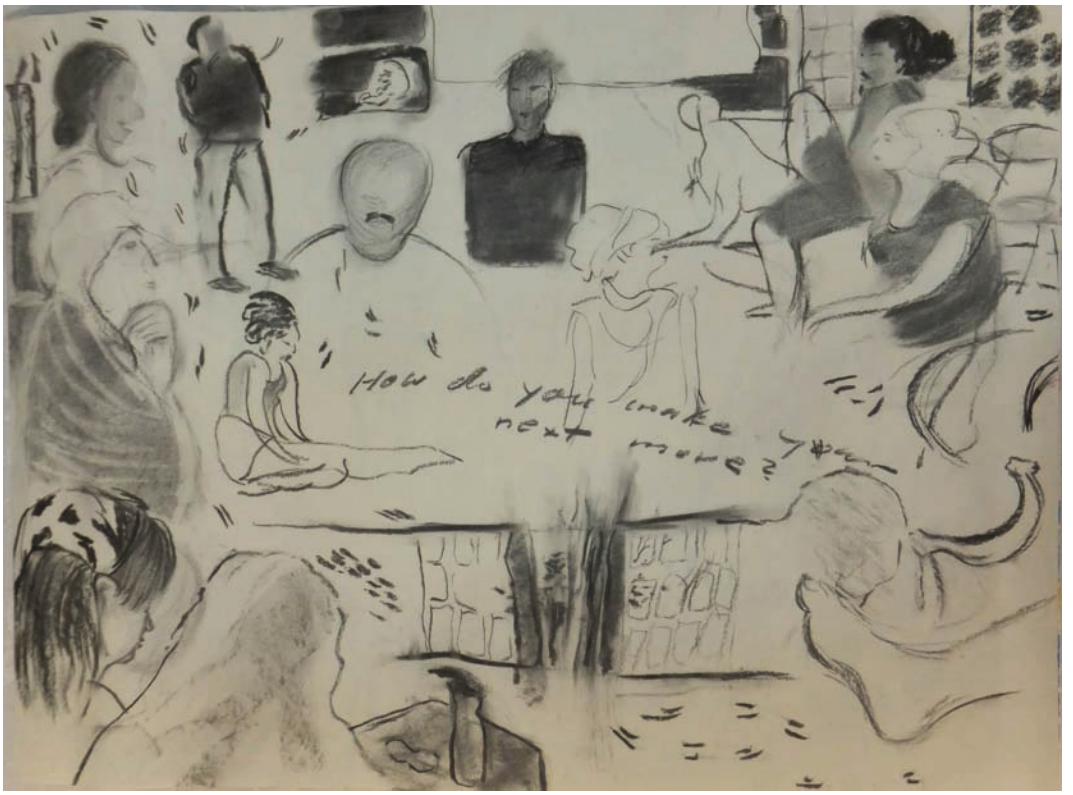
We have covered the ground with asphalt, concrete and metal. We have dug out the land and reconfigured the planet; we have mowed down the trees. We have terrorized, raped and murdered; we have built machines of death and mass graves. During the Second World War, approximately 19 million civilians were killed. Between 1939 and 1943 alone about 30 million people were made refugees at the hands of Hitler and Stalin combined.*

The uprooting and the displacements continue. The latest refugees escape. We live in the midst of unseen violence. The borders change. The adaptation doesn't stop. The refugees and immigrants keep scattering: they keep arriving from someplace else. Old hierarchies crumble. Bright colors fade. Demands for equality and human rights keep rising. We consume more as resources get continually stretched. Gaps in wealth increase. There are continual new beginnings, along with deep irrevocable loss. Such are the stories around us. And yet our openness to these stories can depend upon who we are and from where we come from. When I get specific, when I tell of specific stories—some will say, why this one and not that one; where is your bias; what about us?

Through the papercuts and poems in this book we peer into other words—with disorientation. The images and poems tell of childhoods disrupted by historical events. But what events? These are poems of refugees and immigrants. But where are they from? Where are they going? These are stories of disruption, of conflict and uprooting. These are stories of violence and migration, of new beginnings; adaptation; both gain and loss. These are stories that families share: but what families? Through this disorientation, we have the chance to let down our guard. Without the labels, we can let in our humanity. What suffering human beings cause. What suffering human beings endure. What suffering we face and cause; cause and face. What flux. And yet what hope and love can be contained in a single gesture or act. The images in this book grow from the artist's imagination alongside the combined efforts of a group of unique, wonderful, individuals who lived together briefly by the shores of Pleasant Lake. After the curtain in Portland, Maine, closed, we the performers ate gourmet pizza upstairs. Three days later, we were again scattered around our blue planet as it orbits our slowly dying sun. Yet something precious remains.

*See Tony Judt, Postwar: *A History of Postwar Europe,* New York: Penguin Books, 2005, pp 13-40.

Some names have been changed.



Razia Merchav-Donio

Introduction

by Annie Jacobs

"Expressive Arts; Educational Transformations," was the name of our course. We were a group of 35 educators, artists, and musicians from Israel, Palestine, Jordan, Egypt, Cyprus, the USA, India, and Pakistan. Selected for our interest in the arts and education, we represented a diversity of ages, ethnicities, and creative inclinations. As an artist and writer from the states with experience in the Middle East, I was thrilled with the opportunity.

The two-week intensive was packed with experiential learning sessions, workshops, and field trips where we met and learned from exceptional leaders in the arts and peacebuilding. We were also tasked with a beautiful challenge.

Just a few days in, during one of our daily Morning Circles, Deb Bicknell, who had helped to dream up this course with Daniel Moses, stepped into the circle holding a poster proudly, as if she were applauding our imagined accomplishments. She told us it was already posted around Portland. It read:

"9 Countries, 35 artists, One Concert."

That would be us—yes, we were the 35 — and the performance was planned for the Portland Stage Company in less than two weeks. This assignment would flavor, if not dominate, the rest of our time together.

The pre-planned concert was stressful to many of us, for a variety of reasons. Some in the group were educators, not performers. Some were professional musicians who felt the need to plan and practice extensively in preparation for a concert. A few of

us responded to this sense of overwhelm by joining the planning team, hoping, grasping for some way to realize such an important collaboration.

The planning team was a mix of musicians, theater artists, visual artists, writers, and educators. We brainstormed together while sitting in a circle of benches, each drawing from a unique expertise. We were joined by Emilia Dahlin of The Transcendence Project,* who, along with Bicknell, was spearheading the event. For the concert, Dahlin offered her exquisite skills as a musician and her vision of music as a unifying activity.

I approached the challenge as a writer and editor, and imagined: what if the group – all 35 of us – could create and perform a text that would embody the rich array of voices among us? People liked the idea, and the theme of a "journey" emerged.

A journey. An exciting but laborious task. The theater artists and I discussed how best to collect writing and story imagery from everyone in the course who wished to share. As part of a Morning Circle, we set a few minutes of creative writing time with the offer of four different prompts to choose from. They were:

1. You are on a journey and you come to a barrier. How will you get across?

2. What is your earliest memory of home?

3. Can you remember a time when you had to leave your home for another life somewhere else?

4. What is one thing you would like to take with you? What is one thing you would like to leave behind?

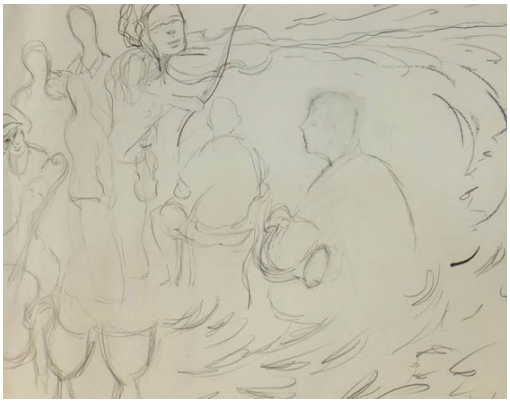
A few days later, I offered a writing workshop in which I shared poems that make use of memory and the five senses, and asked participants to close their eyes to receive the sound, smells, and imagery of the poems. Participants then worked in pairs to create writing that reflected one another's memories of places that are or were at one time "home."

Soon we were sorting through pages of writing from the two exercises, filled with rich anecdote and sensory information. Participants helped to select, translate, and edit strong pieces. This work would become the script and outline to our performance. We chose to remove place names from the writing, in an effort to weave stories from different regions into something that could be a place-neutral, collective journey. The poetic verse would then be read by someone other than the original author, furthering a sense of anonymity.

My biggest concern in the process was that we would fall short in representing the entire group in a satisfactory way. But my colleagues eased that anxiety over lively breakfast meetings and late-night script and scene edits. The skill and dedication of the theater artists as directors and choreographers of what would become something of a play within a concert was awe-inspiring.

So too were the musicians among us, who practiced so much that I fell asleep and woke with their songs in my head. They included: a percussionist from the Amman Symphony Orchestra; guitarists, drummers, and singers from Heartbeat;** an oudist, a violist, and a cellist; and accomplished singers and dancers, all who congealed into a masterful band with a beautiful set of songs from across cultures. Before long, many of us were humming and dancing to these stirring songs, anticipating the day when the makers might get back together to record.

And those who weren't playing music, directing, or otherwise working behind the scenes, became actors, practicing until midnight several nights in a row, under the direction of the theater artists. For some, the idea and practice of acting was entirely new, surprising, frightening, and transformative.



Razia Merchav-Donio

And at the end of the course, within such a short time of ever knowing each other, we were ready (or not) to perform the play and the musical concert for a sizable audience in downtown Portland.

Minutes before the performance, having seen the stage for the first time only hours before, we stood in a large circle that filled the practice room. Led by Emilia, we took a few deep breaths, and joined as a group the way performers must, letting go of angst and shortcomings.

The performance itself? Unforgettable, and a little indescribable. Easier to note the late bus back to camp: calm singing, quiet conversation. Tired, but deeply satisfied, washed-over faces. I believe we succeeded.

~

Once the concert was behind us, we continued to dream. As artists, we hoped that some of what took place could be preserved. And it has been. Ajay Noronha, an Indian filmaker, recorded our planning, practicing, and performance of the concert. He has since produced a film with this material that shares our story in intimate detail.*** Israeli artist Razia Merchav-Donio had drawn us practicing and playing, and hung her drawings in the lobby during the concert. The musicians traveled across borders for many months to record, and have just completed their album. I hoped to find a way to keep the text alive, and to go deeper into its universal, sensory-based imagery. And so, I took an x acto knife to colored paper, and used my imagination.

How to use this book

My intention with this little book is for the illustrations and text to help you encounter places, memories, and life experiences other than your own, yet with familiar elements. I believe that noticing similarities across cultures and conflict areas is an important ingredient to moving us toward peace. Please share this book with people of all ages. For informal education purposes, I have included creative writing exercises in the back that can be used for groups of children or adults in any setting. This book can also be brought to life through role playing and drama exercises. Just as it was a script for our concert, it can be read by members of any class or group, or used to inspire new scripts unique to a particular group. Use your imagination, and let creative writing be a thread among us. For more ideas, see *Resources* on page 38.

A note on the editing process

Most of the text was written in English. Non-native English speakers were encouraged to write in their native tongue, but many chose not to. "Small Stone" was written in Hebrew and translated to English by a participant. Other than removing place names and correcting grammar, all of the text was edited very little from the original.

Credits and Acknowledgements

As this book would not exist without the performance it is based on, I would like to acknowledge those who were involved.

Text by the 2012 Seeds of Peace Educator's Course Participants:

Ajay Noronha, Almas Butt, Amanda N. AlHusainat, Ami Yares, Annie Jacobs, Ayala

Cudykier, Deanna Hartel, Gemma Laser, Ghassan Biromi, Gulan Kripalani, Hadara Rozenblum, Hadass Aharon, Hagai Aharoni, Jihad Sarhan, Julianna Acheson, Lior Lapid, Lubna AlRayyes, Manar Zimmo, Marisol Rosa-Shapiro, Mohammed Isleem, Mohammad Taha Elayyan, Najwa Abbas, Natalia Kouhartsiouk, Noga Raz, Pam Cummings, Rachel Talbot Ross, Razia Merchav-Donio, Reham Ali, Rihab Essawi, Rina Mesika, Sarah Badran, Shoshana Gottesman, Stan Alexander, and Yoram Bitton.

Performance

Music by: Aaron Shneyer, Ami Yares, Ghassan Biromi, Hadass Aharon, Lior Lapid, Mohammad Taha Elayyan, Noga Raz, Shoshana Gottesman, Tamer Omari, and Tareq Muqbil.

Editing and script by: Annie Jacobs, Gemma Laser, Hagai Aharoni, Marisol Rosa-Shapiro, Natalia Kouhartsiouk, and Reham Ali.

Choreography by: Hagai Aharoni, Marisol Rosa-Shapiro, and Natalia Kouhartsiouk.

The performance was facilitated by and also included Seeds of Peace staff:

Aaron Shneyer, Daniel Noah Moses, Deborah Bicknell, Molly Moses, Rachel Nagler, Rebekah Steinfeld, Tamer Omari, Tareq Muqbil, and visiting poet Elana Bell. Rebekah Steinfeld ran lighting during the performance.

Throughout the two-week session, Charlie Murphy and Nadia Chaney of **Partners for Youth Empowerment** (**PYE Global**) were invaluable facilitators of and mentors to the creative collaboration and confidence within our group.

*Learn about the Transcendence Project at http://www.thetranscendenceproject.org/

**Learn about Heartbeat at http://heartbeat.fm/

***Watch Ajay Noronha's film "The Elephant in the Room" at http://vimeo.com/94481061

If any person was missed in these acknowledgments, it was done so unintentionally. Please accept my sincere apology.

Concert planning committee

I WANT TO SEND A MESSAGE

Text by participants in the Seeds of Peace Educator Programs'
Summer 2012 course, "Expressive Arts; Educational Transformations."

Papercuts by Annie Jacobs

SMALL STONE

I want to send a message

to the other side of the river

To make a connection

Write a letter

Put a small stone

into an envelope

to send to the other side

Wondering what is there

Wondering of what to be aware

SILENT SCREAM

I had gone there for the first time

Everyone had been so

kind, warm, hospitable

Still: us and them

Supposed to be enemies

Families torn apart

by arbitrary maps

On the flight back, late at night

I looked down

and saw a long, long line of lights

in the absolute darkness

The line started I don't know where

disappeared who knows where …

. . . An unending line of lights

I asked the person sitting next to me

if he knew what it was,

He said "It is the border.

We put lights along the partition."

Blackness on both sides

and the line of lights – a wall

Like a silent scream

FIRST MEMORY

Smiling reflection

bathroom mirror

soft, warm, rosy

My earliest memory of home

is seeing my smiling reflection

in the bathroom mirror

as my mom held me

snuggled to her chest

We were soft, warm, rosy

MY HOME

Small house

Red floors, open windows, open door

A little bundle of toys

A mattress

Play pens

Safe

A colored fence

Blue, yellow, orange, green

Blue skies

Mid-day siesta with grandma

The smell of her sweat

Ice cream, my father's laughter

MY HOME

Summer hot air flowing through the window

Sitting under the table

Square, blue

Home cooked food

Smell of watermelon and cheese

Dirty feet

Cold marble floor

Sunset

White clouds

Grown up sounds and baby cries

waiting for their moms to come

Cold orange juice

MONSOON'S COMING

Eight months of searing sun
Everything's turned
brackish brown
Us waiting, waiting, just
waiting for June

to drench us
The sky, whole day now, is dark
Clouds roll in from the horizon

Then the rain comes, bringing
a mossy smell to the earth
Far down below our 10th story flat

kids dance dizzily
mothers catching the rain
in their gaping mouths

SILENCED

After my father returned from war, we were
sent to a foreign land. While he was away
my little sister stopped speaking
and I began to speak for her.

In our new school, I was standing on a marble
balcony overlooking a playground full of
children. I saw my sister standing alone
looking lost and afraid. I wanted to yell to the
children, "Please be kind to my sister!"

But I was too far away for them to hear.

NO REAL SUITCASES

After mom got the fake certificate for my eldest brother

we had to flee as quickly as possible

We had no real suitcases

so we made parcels

and tied them with a rope

and like this we went to the train station

WHAT I WANT TO LEAVE BEHIND

I want to forget:

The war memories in my heart

The look of fear

in my daughter's eyes

The smell of blood spreading

over the town

I would like to live in peace

To raise my daughter with

love and care

THE FIELD

I am on a journey

walking through a field

I come to the end and the only way out

is down a very steep slope

If I can get to to the other side,

I will enter a land where I will never die

I lie down in defeat

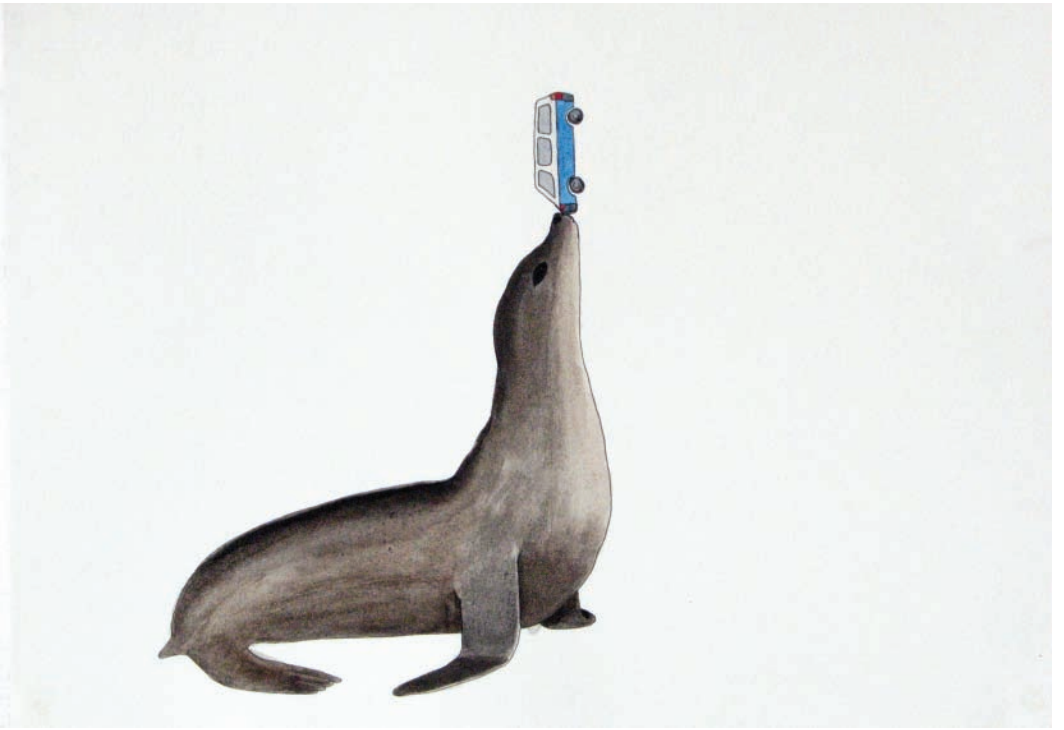
and I fall asleep

and dream of a way to cross

Of Smoke Rings and Bubbles

(on imagination, learning, and the human future)

Essay by Daniel Noah Moses



Sarah Badran

1

Blowing smoke rings from his mouth, with the "nargeela" pipe in his right hand and his elbow on the table, the eminent philosopher Jurgen Habermas looks at me with sad eyes and a crooked smile.

"Perhaps," he says, "the Intuitive Dog often does wag the Rational Tail."[1]

It takes effort to understand him because of his German accent and hair lip, because it's been an intense day and we are both on our second large glass of beer.

"Yes," I say, as he hands me the pipe. "If you ask me for one 'take away' after fourteen years of work on the ground combining theory and practice, it is this—that we human beings are not nearly as reasonable as I had assumed."

We are in the Jerusalem Hotel, across the street from the buses to Ramallah, a short walk to Damascus Gate. Habermas opens up a large hard cover book. "I've been reading what you gave me. Be more specific: what do you want me to see?"

"Take a look at this," I say, pointing to a place on page 91. Habermas reads: "Conscious reasoning functions like a press secretary who automatically justifies any position taken by the president."

"And this here," I say to Habermas, who was included in a *Time Magazine* list of the 100 most influential people in the world. They called him "the sage of reason," though the author wrote that Habermas "is often cited as a sage by people who would rather chew glass than read his lumbering prose." [2]

In his German accent Habermas reads: "Rea-

1 Jonathan Haidt. *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People are Divided by Politics and Religion* (2012). New York: Pantheon Books, 2012, p. 27

2 *Time Magazine*, April 26th, 2004, p. 109.

soning can take us to almost any conclusion we want to reach, because we ask 'Can I believe it?' When we want to believe something, but 'Must I believe it?' when we don't want to believe. The answer is almost always yes to the first question and no to the second." [3] "And yet," Habermas says, "this book and others like it are themselves presented as arguments, no?"

"Yes," I say.

"They emphasize the weakness of reason and how much we operate through intuition. Yet they appeal to our reason to understand."

"That's right."

"Okay," says the eminent philosopher. "And what is the connection between such statements and your embrace of the arts?"

II

At a peace conference in Anatalya, Turkey, in December 2006, I quoted Habermas in my argument for how critical it is for people in conflict to engage directly with one another. A participant called me "naïve" because of my faith in the ability of people to work through differences nonviolently. "You are clearly not," she said, "from the bloody Middle East." That month I moved to Jerusalem to work with Seeds of Peace.

To understand Seeds of Peace, imagine a sturdy tent in an environment of intense conflict and howling winds. This tent is a haven, a place where warring sides can meet safely. In the tent, the opportunity exists to speak one's heart and mind to those from "the other side" and to listen to what is in their hearts and minds.

A group from one side of the conflict stops by for coffee. They say to the people who keep the tent steady and strong: "why spend your time with this tent? We need you to join our struggle."

A group from another side of the conflict stops by for tea. They say, "Why don't you support us against them?"

But the tent cannot be pulled in any one direction. It must remain safe for those who want to come in from the harsh environment, where such tents—containers for productive conflict—are in such short supply.

People inside have the opportunity to rage for all who they are, to rage against what they see on the "other side," to marshal their facts, to take risks and exercise courage, to listen, to build respect and trust, to transform the conflict into something more productive, more meaningful, more humane.

Seeds of Peace is a test of Habermas's faith. In his magnum opus, he depicts a precarious human future where our technological development is outpacing our ability to cope. We have destructive power unprecedented in human existence.[4] To navigate such a reality, Habermas puts his faith in the practice of public reason—the potential of active citizens engaged in public discussion about the pressing issues that matter. The complexity of such issues is overwhelming. The physical and emotional barriers are high, the radical gaps in understanding wide and deep. The conflicts that burn and simmer are embedded in our larger horizons of understanding—the contrasting and overlapping "narratives" (what Habermas calls "lifeworlds"). Systems of the market and the state shape how we learn, from where and how we collect our information, what "we" believe versus what "they" take as a matter of course. In his work, Habermas explores how, with the appropriate practice and tools, people can engage with one another in authentic democratic ways, confront ideas, perspectives, needs, that are different from their own, and figure out how to share this small blue planet.

Teenagers and educators arrive at the Seeds of Peace International Camp on the shores of Pleasant Lake armed with facts. Confronted with challenges to the frameworks that sustain them—they are shaken. Suddenly what was taken for granted becomes something to explore or run and hide from before gathering the courage to look again. I have seen adults of all ages act like unruly children. I have seen sixty year olds cry. It is not easy to express oneself. It takes bravery to listen. Participants share a room with one of "those" people. They share chores, a toilet, the humdrum routines of their humanity; they listen to one another snore. Facts, stories, images, that previously bounced

3 Haidt, p. 91.

4 See Jurgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action, Volume I: Reason and the Rationalization of Society* and *The Theory of Communicative Action, Volume II: Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason*, translated by Thomas McCarthy. Boston: Beacon Press, 1984.

off now get lodged in their souls. There are no straight paths. Such contact enlarges the scope of empathy; it makes room for uncomfortable complexity. What one learns can take years to flower. Some who remain silent during "dialogue" pick up a paintbrush, walk together early in the morning, work on a new curriculum, plan new projects, or put up dry wall for an art project. Others sit around the fire late at night until the last embers die down.

III

"What would you say is the purpose of art?" Habermas asks me as we walk in the park below the Israel Museum, past the Monastery of the Cross, built on the spot that the Empress Helena identified in the fourth century as where the tree once stood that was cut down and later used to make the Crucifix.

"First off," I say, "through the arts, human beings transform sadness, suffering, pain, joy, celebration, laughter, love and mundane details of everyday life into creations that exist beyond us, that we can share, that enrich our lives. Through the arts, we communicate; we express ourselves; we enlarge our perspectives. We exercise our imaginations."

"Yes," says Habermas.

"We are constrained by the shortness of our lives and extreme limitedness of our experience. Through the arts we have the chance to live vicariously. We open up doors to worlds difficult to gain access to otherwise. Through the arts, we multiply and deepen our experiences and perspectives. We exercise our imagination. We enlarge our scope of empathy. Art can empower us to see the world in new ways. It can spark within us a sense of different possibilities."

"That's a start," Habermas says. "How about some frozen yogurt?"

After we are sitting with our yogurt, up the hill on Azza Street, he asks: "Do you think that being involved in the arts somehow makes you a better, more caring, person?"

"I don't mean that," I say. "But I do wonder about the relationship between imagination and empathy. Isn't there an 'elective affinity' between the two? If we can imagine more perspectives, if we can understand one another and the vast range of needs and ways of being in the world—does this perhaps increase the chance for kindness?"

A strawberry sits precariously on Habermas's spoon. "Hmmm," he almost whispers, as he brings the spoon to his mouth. As a teenager in Nazi Germany, he was a member of the Hitler Youth. "Love of music, of art, of literature," the aged philosopher then says, shaking his head, "I am sorry to say, is compatible with the most dehumanizing acts of cruelty."

IV

In response, I turn to the wall of my living room where there hangs the painting of a hippopotamus with a micro-bus (or mini-van) jutting out of his mouth. This is one of a series painted by Sarah Badran, a participant in the Educators' course. You might ask what paintings of wild animals and micro-buses have to do with the themes we are talking about—experiential education, cross-cultural understanding, civic engagement, mutual respect, human dignity, empowerment, leadership, active transformation of the status quo, even "peace."

What use is a giant polar bear's apparent inquisitiveness about a micro-bus (or perhaps it's a regular sized polar bear and a tiny micro-bus)?

What might we make of a seal twirling a micro-bus on his nose?

What really is the significance of an elephant about to squash a micro-bus or a of a micro-bus pierced violently by a swordfish?

It boils down to imagination. Sarah did these paintings as a creative response to a difficult reality around her. Instead of just getting angry or upset, she created surprising beauty. I smile when I see these paintings. Through the arts, human beings transform sadness, suffering, pain, joy, celebration, laughter, love and the mundane details of everyday life, into creations that exist beyond us and that enrich our lives. Through the arts we communicate with one another. And by exercising our imagination in specific ways we can grow stronger.

Inside a museum in Yerevan, Armenia, are tiny portraits sketched on bottle caps by Sergei Parajanov, a famous Armenian filmmaker who did time as a political prisoner of the Soviet Regime. To me, these tiny sketches are

grand monuments to the human imagination. Although done under radically different conditions, I think of Sarah's paintings of animals and micro-bus paintings in a similar way.

At this level, the arts—the focused application of the imagination—help us to survive and even flourish in the midst of difficult conditions. Through the imagination, we are more adaptable and resilient than we otherwise might be. Yet this use as a tool for coping and even flourishing is only part of what the arts, and the imagination, have the potential to do.

In the conflicts where I have worked, in the Caucasus, the Middle East, South Asia, the United States, I have noticed that a disproportionate number of people who work actively for a more humane world are involved in the arts. I'm talking about visual artists and musicians; people involved in the dramatic arts, in writing and filmmaking. This is not an accident. The imagination grows stronger with exercise. Because people engaged in the arts have strong and well-tuned imaginations, they are able to see what does not exist around them; they are inspired to create what is out of the realm of possibility for those confined to existing reality. At the same time, those involved in the arts are equipped to express themselves; they are able to depict and project experiences that can be obscured for others. Through the arts, they are able to resist the status quo.

For example, the situation between Israelis and Palestinians is tragic, surreal and full of suffering. People who persevere are so often (though not only) involved in the arts. Among the most inspiring organizations on the ground are those that focus on music, theater and visual art. My friend Aaron founded Heartbeat while we were both living in Jerusalem. During that time, in late December 2008 and the first days of 2009, there was a war, or an escalation of the conflict, in Gaza. Nobody wanted to talk about "peace." I used to walk from Bethlehem to Emek Refaim, a main thoroughfare in the German Colony, a posh neighborhood in West Jerusalem (founded in the late nineteenth-century by Germans who anticipated the Second Coming), talking on my cell-phone with my friend Mohammed in Gaza. I could hear the bombs in the background. Then I would sit with Aaron, as he talked about his vision to make music with Palestinian and Israeli teenagers.[5] Through making music together they express themselves and engage in dialogue with one another and the world around them; they resist the status quo. "The mic is mightier than the gun," says their website. Heartbeat embodies what has taken me so long to understand (and what I continue to learn)—that we human beings have a deep range of expression beyond words, and that learning involves the heart at least as much as the mind.

About three years later, in 2012, I approached Aaron about creating a Seeds of Peace educators' course focused on the arts; he said yes. I asked Deb, my friend and colleague, to work on the design of this course. A native Mainer with deep roots in the area, she had an idea. "Let's do a performance in Portland," she said.

At the "Expressive Arts; Educational Transformations" Course, at the Seeds of Peace International Camp, on the shores of Pleasant Lake, in Otisfield, Maine, with staff, we had more than 40 people—Americans, a Cypriot, Egyptian, Indians, Israelis, Jordanians, a Pakistani, Palestinians—working at the intersection of the arts and education. The course took place for two weeks at the end of July and the beginning of August. It was during Ramadan and the schedule was shaped accordingly. For those fasting, there was a meal before daybreak; for those eating there was breakfast and lunch and snacks in the afternoon; we enjoyed a big dinner together as a full group at an Iftar after night fall, which comes late in Maine in the summer. Participants engaged in a range of activities: expression through the arts; hands-on practice in facilitation through the arts; small group discussions; workshops and lectures; we did playback theater and yoga; we went on site visits (road trips); we shared best practices; we cooked and walked together; a few learned how to swim. On hot days we jumped into the lake. Participants struggled with one another through the arts to express pain; to listen; to understand. There was genuine laughter by the shores of Pleasant Lake and beauty all around. There were arguments.

5 Out of frustration with the political situation, I wrote "Gaza Needs A Peace Stimulus," *The Christian Science Monitor* (January 14, 2009); see http://www.seedsofpeace.org/?p=881

Sometimes the questions stung. Assumptions were overturned. Tempers erupted; hearts were bruised. Even grownups get growing pains. As the culmination of the course, participants created a performance—"We Make The Road By Walking"—which took place in front of a packed house on the evening of August 5th, 2012, in Portland, Maine.

The days and nights leading up to the performance were consumed by practice and preparations. When the lights turned on to a full house, what happened on stage was something difficult to capture with words; when the curtain closed, audience members got to their feet in a standing ovation.

I try to describe all of this to the eminent philosopher Jurgen Habermas as we stand on Jaffa Road, a pedestrian promenade, next to a clown waving a long net-like contraption. When the clown shakes the contraption, bubbles emerge and grow into the air. Parents and children stand with their eyes on the bubbles and their mouths agape. An ultra-Orthodox Jewish boy of eight or so with long blond "peyot" (side curls) runs after the bubbles and tries to pop them. Almost always, the bubbles float beyond his reach, though sometimes he is lucky. A young Palestinian man with an impressive amount of jell in his dark sculpted hair walks next to a young Palestinian woman with a head covering that she wears so gracefully. Just behind them is a girl of five or six in a dainty dress and patent leather shoes, skipping; when she notices the large floating bubbles she stops, mouth agape, and stares.

V

Jurgen Habermas, my friends Deb and Ajay, and I, are sitting on plastic chairs outside of the pottery shop across the road from what Jews call the Me'arat ha-Machpela; what Muslims call the Ibrahimi Mosque; what we in English refer to as the Cave of the Patriarchs. According to tradition, this is the resting place of the patriarch Abraham/Ibrahim. According to The Bible, Abraham (Ibrahim) bought the cave and the land around it as a resting place for his wife Sarah after she died. It was the first land he owned in The Holy Land. According to tradition, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Sarah, Rebecca, and Leah are buried here. Adam and Eve are buried here, too. When King Herod reigned two thousand years ago this was already an ancient holy site. Herod—king when Jesus was born—built over and around the cave: his building still stands, the only one of this ambitious builder to remain intact. Everything around this holy site is a testament, a timeworn monument, to a broken world.

If you stand outside the shop and look to your left, you see a row of shops that sell the same mix of souvenirs. There are two separate entrances to the tombs. One is for Jews, the other for Muslims. Christian Palestinians can visit the Muslim side except on Friday, when it is barred to them. International Christians can visit either side (except on Fridays, when they can only visit the Jewish side). Palestinians emphasize that this separation started after a Jewish terrorist Baruch Goldstein went on a shooting spree that killed 29 people in the mosque before he, too, was killed. Israelis emphasize that when the Holy Site was under Ottoman and British control, Jews were barred from regular access and had to pray at a designated place outside Herod's ancient walls.

Three soldiers stand at the dividing line, the last place where Palestinians can walk without permission. One of the brothers who own the pottery shop pours us each a small cup of Arabic coffee. In the back, two men on tall stools are molding soft clay with their spinning wheels. I describe to Habermas what it is like to keep the tent of dialogue stable while the conflicts rage around us without an end in sight: the malaise and disillusionment; the bureaucracy of permits to bring Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza to the Israeli side; the fact that Israelis are barred by Israeli law from "Area A," the territory in the West Bank under Palestinian control; the movement among Palestinians and those who identify as their supporters against "normalization," which is related to "BDS" (boycott, divestment, sanction). "The argument here," I explain, "is that Palestinians and their allies must cut contact with all Israelis except those in solidarity with the Palestinian struggle: the BDS movement has a specific definition of what this means. 'Normalization' is interaction between Palestinians and Israelis that confirms the status quo. People in the BDS movement view dialogue and educational organizations that bring

Palestinians and Israelis together as supporting the status quo. The other obstacles to meeting cross-border have been relatively constant over these last years: the forces of 'anti-normalization' are growing stronger."

"I imagine," says Habermas, "that meeting to talk might look for some like just talking—and talking and talking. Such talking could feel like tacit support for the status quo."

"Yes," I say. "Although I understand why the movement to stop dialogue and educational initiatives such as Seeds of Peace is growing, I believe that those who boycott organizations such as Seeds of Peace are tragically misguided. Now more than ever we need connections across lines of conflict. Now more than ever we need active humanization; we need opportunities for productive and meaningful conflict. And yet, listen to what happened recently with Jed, a drama teacher from a college town in New England. I met him at least five years ago at the Freedom Theater in Jenin; he was traveling with his daughter, visiting Israeli relatives while also going out of their way to learn more about Palestinian perspectives and life on the ground. Jed impressed me. We met again in Jerusalem; we have stayed in touch. Over the years he returned repeatedly to Jenin to work with the actor, director, teacher and activist, Juliano Mer-Khamis. Jed worked with Juliano on a production of "Animal Farm," not long before Juliano was shot to death outside of the theater that he worked so hard to rebuild. Early this year Jed told me that he wanted to visit the Seeds of Peace camp; we've been going back and forth for months, planning how to integrate drama into our dialogue process."

"Interesting," says Habermas, sipping his coffee.

"But he suddenly changed his mind. He says that he cannot be part of Seeds of Peace because we don't take a strong enough stand against the Occupation. He is under pressure and doesn't want to alienate his allies or betray his friends who are active in the BDS movement. They give him and others I know a choice. If you work with organizations such as Seeds of Peace, they refuse to work with you. They cut ties, and you become an enemy. Meanwhile, my friend Mohammed Isleem, who lives in Shaj'ia—a suffering neighborhood in Gaza, largely destroyed by the bombs dropped in summer of 2014—is pushing to move forward with Seeds of Peace."

"I see," says Habermas, shaking his head sadly. "And yet you understand why this movement against 'normalization' is growing and why Seeds of Peace is a target?"

"With lack of any movement toward a two state solution or another peaceful alternative, the anger and frustration is completely understandable. There are debates about economic boycott. Such debates are not my focus. My aim is to preserve and radically expand the opportunity for people-to-people initiatives.[6] The conflicts will continue at various levels for a long time. Much of the anger toward Seeds of Peace grows from a lack of understanding about what we can and cannot do. As strange as it might sound, we do NOT make peace. Seeds of Peace and other similar organizations play a critical role. At the same time, it's a limited role. What we do is not by itself nearly enough. We clearly are not everything. We are something—something that I would argue is useful (essential) and good."

"Hmmm," says Habermas.

"A few months ago my friend Mohammed Isleem and I visited the Friend's School in Ramallah. A mutual friend of ours—a Palestinian teacher at the school—wanted us to experience first-hand what he is up against. The students he introduced us to told us that they would never be involved in Seeds of Peace because for them it is normalization. When I asked those with Jerusalem IDs if they shop at Malcha or Mamilla Malls on the 'Israeli side,' they said, of course. But shopping—the simple exchange of money for goods—leaves no space for the transformation of the status quo. To me, that's normalization. Going to Seeds of Peace, in contrast, as we've spoken about, offers Palestinians and others rare opportunities to engage, to resist, to make a positive difference."

"What about the Israelis?" asks Habermas.

"Through Seeds of Peace, Israelis express themselves to people who would never have the chance to meet them, and to Palestinians who know them in unfortunately limited ways.

6 Among other places, I make the case for people-to-people initiatives in the face of "anti-normalization" in this article: http://www.yourmiddleeast.com/opinion/daniel-noah-moses-antinormalisation-boycott-of-education-programs-hurts-us-all_18719

Palestinians interact with Israeli soldiers and the bureaucracy of the Israeli state. Arabs from outside of Israel know Israelis as the enemy on their television screens. Through Seeds of Peace, Palestinians, Egyptians, Jordanians, Pakistanis, Indians, others, meet Israelis for the first time as human beings and learn about Israeli perspectives. This kind of interaction and what grows from it is critical for Israelis who want to build a secure and democratic homeland over the long haul. At the same time, most Israelis have little or no experience with Palestinians in the West Bank or even East Jerusalem (let alone Gaza). It's critical for them to meet and hear directly from Palestinians, and to learn more from and about their neighbors in Egypt and Jordan."

"What is the challenge for the Israelis?"

"I would argue that Israelis have a specific responsibility to understand more concretely what is done in their name—how Palestinians experience Israeli authority and power. As much as possible Israeli society tries to ignore the conflict. For Palestinians this is not possible. In the absence of a peace process, even Palestinians who are ready to engage in dialogue challenge what Seeds of Peace stands for. They point out that the status quo is sinking into the ground, while they suffer and lose hope. Israelis need to actively understand and deal with this reality. For example, there were Palestinian Seeds (campers) at camp this past summer who refused to pass the ball to Israeli teammates during a soccer game or to cooperate with Israelis in other 'fun' activities. To them, passing the ball was a form of normalization—while coming to camp to engage in dialogue was part of resisting the status quo."

"Did this persist throughout the session?"

"For some, yes."

"How did the camp staff respond?"

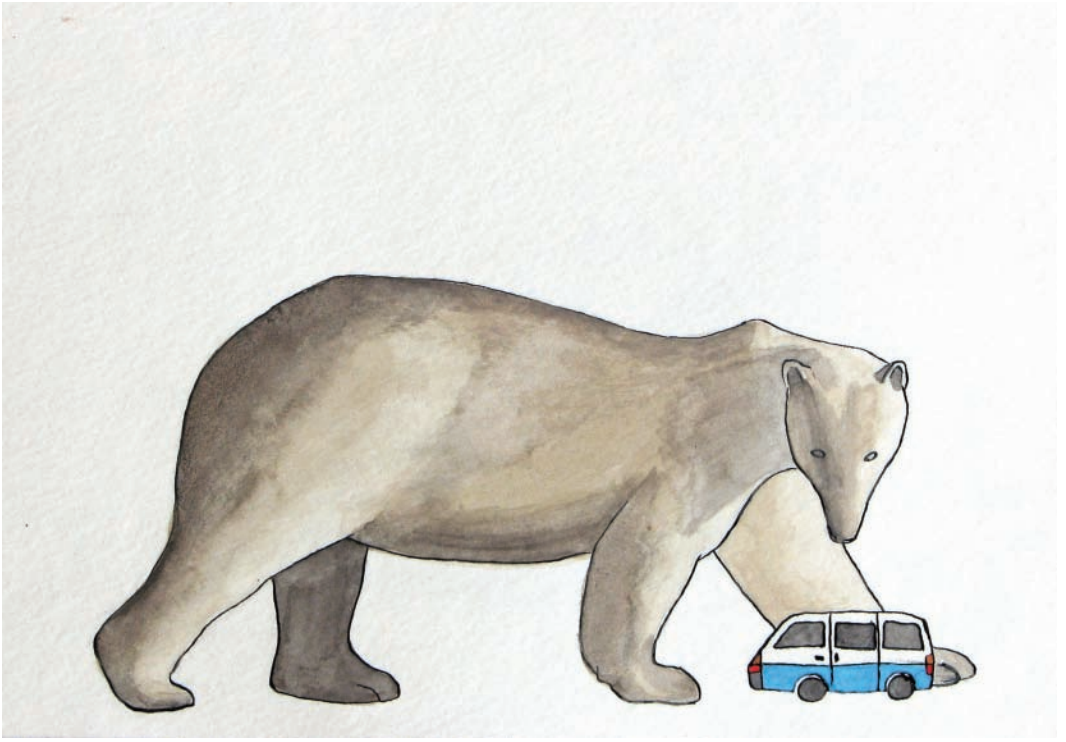
"As usual, all participants at camp commit to the dialogue. But it was okay if a Seed didn't want to participate in an activity outside of dialogue. It was up to them. This past summer, the Palestinian delegation came to camp wearing black shirts in solidarity with the people of Gaza. The conflict raging beyond camp was reflected in camp. The Palestinian and Israeli Delegation Leaders—the educators, community leaders, artists who accompany the Seeds—felt the weight of responsibility. The Palestinian Delegation Leaders walked off the buses as if on their way to a funeral. For the first time in my experience, we did not assign Arab and Israeli Delegation Leaders to share bunks. We felt that sleeping in the same rooms would be too threatening, too uncomfortable, and thus counterproductive. And yet camp was still camp. Living together and engaging in dialogue, it's difficult to avoid the humanity of 'the other.' At the end of Color Games, just like every year, most of us jumped into the lake and sang the Seeds of Peace song."

"So was the summer a success?"

"In a deep way, yes. At the same time, I recognize that camp is only a step, a spark for the imagination. I see what we are up against and how the situation is in flux. There was a Palestinian Delegation Leader from a refugee camp; he grew up with constant clashes between the Israeli military and his family and neighbors; a friend of his was killed a week or so before the camp session started. After the summer he emphasized to me how hard it was to be in a place with equality, where he had the chance to speak and be heard—because he also had to listen to Israelis who were soldiers, who are soldiers, who have children serving in the army, who have power over him. He said that we try to 'equalize' the situation when the situation is not equal. He, too, wants us to take specific stands."

"What do you say?" asks Habermas.

"I say, look, we try as much as possible to create conditions of equality where everybody has a voice. We leave it up to participants like him to make the most of the opportunity. This is what we mean when we say that we 'empower' leaders. It is our mission to include the widest possible range of people. We want the skeptical and unconvinced. I emphasize how important it is to have his voice at camp. By speaking with such bravery and dignity about his life in a refugee camp, he reached Israelis who had never heard such things before. By moving them and teaching them, he resisted the status quo. He also made connections that can support him as a leader making the changes that he wants to make. If Seeds of Peace as an organization took the stands that he wants us to take, mainstream Israelis would stop par-



Sarah Badran

ticipating. For them the tent would stop being safe. This would diminish his voice and power. I ask him whether or not he saw value in what we do and if he felt that the absence of Seeds of Peace would be a tangible loss."

Habermas nods.

"It's important to mention that Israelis continually tell me that we are perceived as pro-Palestinian, as anti-Israeli. The tent is pulled from every direction; we can only do our best. We create opportunities for transformative education that encourage people to learn directly from one another, that encourage people to question, to think for themselves (this is where the arts become essential in so many ways). We support and encourage reflective learning communities—of active citizens, of leaders—who radically disagree among themselves while also caring about one another. We are a school for public spheres. We create the opportunity for connection, the opportunity to build trust; to learn tools for communication and leadership; we empower leaders who will then move in and out of the tent. In the tent, people argue; they learn; and yes, enjoy one another. Outside of the tent, people engage as citizens, as leaders, and take a variety of strong political positions. If you look you will find veterans of Seeds of Peace everywhere. They are leaders. They are activists. They can and will oppose one another. Yet people who learn through Seeds of Peace have uncommon ability to engage with the conflict and one another effectively—to be leaders with imagination, understanding, growing empathy, and far more skills. The educators, community leaders and artists I work with have positions from which to exercise leadership. Through their work, they have the potential to spark the 'moral imagination,' to reach out to students and colleagues, to cultivate the environment for seeds to flourish. . ."

"Hmmm," says Habermas, sipping the dregs of another small cup of Arabic coffee. "Is what you say here relevant beyond the Middle East?"

"Definitely. I wish we had more time now to talk about the Pakistanis, Indians, Afghans, Americans and Cypriots who I've worked with through Seeds of Peace. From my point of view, what we do in South Asia, the United

States, and everywhere else, is part of one mission. It is a coordinated attempt to practice living together, to practice the kind of learning that will equip us to live together on a broader scale."

"I see," says Habermas, with a smile, "how your work with Seeds of Peace relates to my life's work."

"Absolutely," I respond. "To what extent can democracy actually work?"

"Good question," says Habermas, still smiling, but with an expression that is difficult to describe.

"I have learned so much from you. I think about the systems that envelope us. I think of the almost overwhelming wisdom and knowledge required to make thoughtful decisions about the complex forces acting upon us. I think about how powerless I so often feel to make any change at all. And there is just so much noise. I put my faith in a specific kind of education—and a kind of place (which you call a 'public sphere')—that empowers people to be strong in themselves (autonomous thinkers) while being open and engaged, even respectful and loving, with human beings who have radically different opinions on fundamental issues of common concern. The conflicts would be healthier if more people could have the opportunity for such learning. Our ability to actually govern ourselves would improve greatly. Reason is critical—but as that book says, 'conscious reasoning functions like a press secretary who automatically justifies any position taken by the president.' I pay far more attention to the heart than I did before. We are emotional beings. The heart and mind work together in ways that we only begin to understand. Meanwhile, we live our lives and make judgments and decisions the best we can. I imagine a broad range of difficult work to create a viable, just, flourishing human future. To put it another way, I want what Martin Luther King spoke about: love as the foundation from which social and political movements can grow.[7] I don't mean an easy "peace out" kind of love. I'm talking about love that grows with struggle alongside 'the moral imagination.' What we do at Seeds of Peace is definitely NOT the only ingredient for a viable, just, and flourishing human future. I'm staking my life that it is a critical and essential ingredient. I would definitely argue," I say to the eminent philosopher, "that Seeds of Peace is founded on the hopes and vision that you expound upon in your books."

For a few moments, there is only silence between us. Jurgen Habermas looks at me and nods. Continuing his gaze, he speaks as if he is thinking out loud. "It must be difficult for you to hold the tent, to submerge yourself, to absorb, to see and listen, while suppressing the desire to express your own thoughts and feelings. . . ."

"The pressure builds up for sure." Just as I'm about to say more, two visitors walk toward us.

"I am Abraham," says the one with fierce eyes, as he extends his hand. "And this is one of the angels who visited me many years ago."

The man gives a slight bow. He is wearing a khaki vest with a lot of pockets, like those that tourists in foreign countries often wear.

"Have a seat, my father," says one of the brothers who own the pottery shop, as the other brother pours small cups of Arabic coffee. "Thank you, my friend," says Abraham, sipping his coffee quickly, so that we can start on a walk.

We cross the road, to the area that is for Palestinians with West Bank IDs. Boys of ten, eleven, twelve, dirty clothes, dirty faces, are just up the hill, near the guarded entrance to the Old City, waiting to sell us cheap key chains and bracelets, maps of historical Palestine, wooden prayer beads, bands of blue and white glass to ward off the evil eye.

We turn left past the checkpoint with the young soldier looking down, through the revolving doors, to the streets of the Old City of Hebron. Habermas and Abraham walk side by side. "What faith you have in reason," says Abraham to Habermas. "Have you no place for revelation?"

Before they can continue, a small man with an Elvis style hair cut and lamb chop sideburns calls out. "Daniel," he says, smiling. He is standing outside one of the small shops that line the

7 "Somewhere somebody must have some sense. Men must see that force begets force, hate begets hate, toughness begets toughness. And it is all a descending spiral, ultimately ending in destruction for all and everybody. Somebody must have sense enough and morality enough to cut off the chain of hate and the chain of evil in the universe. And you do that by love," Martin Luther King, *Loving Your Enemies*, 7 November 1957.

streets of Hebron's Old City.

"Ibrahim," I say, as he comes to hug me, "I see you are wearing the shirt."

The small man with the swirly pompadour and lamb chop sideburn smiles. The shirt, which is red, says:

Peace will Come
Why not Now?

I turn to Habermas, Abraham and the angel who once visited Abraham and Sarah a long time ago. "There is a man from the Netherlands who visits the Holy Land every so often. From his own pocket, he orders multi-colored t-shirts and scarves and goes around giving them out. It's the kind of spontaneous act that you sometimes find in the Holy Land."

The angel who once visited Abraham and Sarah a long time ago nods his head. "Yes. He is an angel I traveled with when we visited, you, Abraham, and your wife Sarah a long time ago."

"Ah," says Abraham (Ibrahim). "Is that what he is up to these days. . ."

The little man who sells souvenirs says, "but that man with the t-shirts hasn't been here for too long and I need a new one. Tourists buy more from me when I wear one of these shirts."

A group of international monitors walk past us. In Hebron, The Israeli army has cameras pointed in all directions. An Israeli human rights organization distributes cameras to the local Palestinians. You can find the videos on the Internet. The international monitors are yet another set of eyes. I look up at the chain link fence that has been hung over the shop level as a net. The backs of the Israeli homes face this street of the Old City; some of the settlers throw garbage down. This part of Hebron is desolate. Shops are deserted. Old men finger prayer beads. Blood, memory and suffering have soaked into the ground. "From all directions, they call me father," says Abraham. "It is enough to break my heart."

VI

The eminent philosopher Jurgen Habermas, my friends Deb, Ajay and I, are weaving our motorcycles through the streets of Delhi, past a mélange of moving shapes: past auto rickshaws and skinny cows led by leathery old women; beggars with contorted faces and missing limbs; men in dark business suits, veggie fast food restaurants, women in colorful saris doing construction work; towering glass office complexes, unkempt lush greenery, and grey apartment blocks. To our left is a man on a moped, with a woman in a long yellow saree sitting behind him, her legs sidesaddle, holding a baby. None of the three are wearing helmets.

"Let's turn to the right, here," yells Habermas over the traffic din as he motions with his hands. "The school is up the road."

As we enter, the woman cleaning the floor falls to her knees and literally starts to kiss our feet. The principal runs in her sari to the prostrate woman and pulls her away. "I'm so sorry," the principal says to us. "She follows the old ways."

Habermas stands in front of the class of 11th graders—local Indian students and visiting Pakistani students. When he asks how many have facebook, all hands go up.

Habermas looks out at the room with a combination of curiosity and owlish ferocity. "How is it for you to spend time with one another," he asks.

"It is a great privilege, Sir," says a serious looking girl with dark eyes and long black hair.

"And what does that mean?" wonders Habermas out loud. "We are supposed to be enemies," the girl explains. "And we have vivid disagreements with one another. It is hard for me to understand sometimes how they can be so wrongheaded" (She smiles). "We have different narratives, which we hold dear. But we don't want violence against one another. Perhaps we can really be friends. At the very least we need to be human, to resolve our differences without shooting at one another or dropping the nuclear bombs."

"Is that an option?" asks Habermas.

"Well, Sir, we both certainly have it in our power to drop the bombs."

VII

The Seeds of Peace International Camp on the shores of Pleasant Lake is crisp and quiet in late September. I am here for a reunion of the "Expressive Arts; Educational Transformations" course. There is Deb talking with my great-aunt Sophie, while Sophie mixes the

batter for those corn pancakes that I loved so much as a child. The mustached Ajay is carrying a case of high quality beer on his shoulder as he makes drumming sounds with his mouth (badump dum, dush). Mohammed, the drummer from Jordan, nods his head and closes his eyes as he fondles the taba in his hands. Hagai, who founded a drama school for disadvantaged youth in Jerusalem's German Colony, is there with his monkey puppet. Almas from Lahore, Jihad (who has moved to South Carolina), Rihab from Jerusalem (once active in The Bereaved Family Forum), Lubna, the school principal from Gaza, and Ayala from the hills above Lake Tiberius, are moving the tables and chairs. Nat, a "Seed" who started her own NGO in Cyprus to do drama with youth, is organizing the silverware. Hadara (with Seeds of Peace from the beginning), who oversees the selection and preparation of the Israeli Delegation, and her friend, Rina, also a high-ranking official in the Israeli Ministry of Education, are cutting garlic and onions with Rima who teaches drama and French at a Palestinian university. Rachel, a leader within the African-American community in Maine, and Gulan, a filmmaker and facilitator from Mumbai, are cutting fresh vegetables for the giant salad bowls. The singers and musicians, Yoram (who is also a supervisor of school counselors and working on his Ph.D. in social theory), Aaron, Tamer, Shoshi and Ami (the Heartbeat gang) are laying out the fish. Manar, a young teacher from Gaza who sang a breathtaking solo for the performance and has recorded that song for the album, is beside them, cutting the lemons. Hadass is setting up her cello. Rebecca, who teaches at a Jewish day school in the Berkshires, and, Tareq from the El Arub Refugee camp, are shucking the corn. Pam, a founder of a museum of African-American history in Portland, along with the painters Sarah and Razia, are organizing the various bowls of appetizers. Marisol, the dancer and drama and dance teacher who lived until recently in Italy; Gemma, from the Maine coast; and Amanda from Bethlehem, are practicing a choreographed dance as they arrange the flowers. Ghassan is tuning his oud, getting ready to play. Anne Germanacos—who supports so many wonderful art programs (including this book)—catches my eye and smiles. Habermas stands next to Lior, who founded a youth N.G.O when he was a teenager that now operates across Israel, Noga, who works with him, and Riham from Cairo, who teaches and writes poetry, talking about a "cultural impoverishment and fragmentation of everyday consciousness."

"The challenge," I hear Habermas say, his voice accompanied by the beauty of Ghassan's oud. I look out at the lake. A canoe is reaching land. It is Annie Jacobs, the artist who created this book. Just as the scents of fish and garlic mingle with the sounds of the oud, cello and guitar, the voices and the laughter, I introduce Habermas to Annie. I tell him about the book, which grows from the "Expressive Arts" course and that Portland performance.

While I am talking, I look all around for Mohammed Isleem, my friend who is the Director of Seeds of Peace in Gaza. When I see him with a large sack of eggplants, I smile. Yes, he is here. He smiles back and I notice that he is wearing a new cap.

We found out about the kidnapping of the three Israeli teenagers while at a four day summer camp in Jenin for Palestinian children from across East Jerusalem and the West Bank. The next day we organized vans to take the children and educators back to Hebron, which was under "lockdown." I spoke on the phone with Palestinian friends who from their windows, balconies and roofs watched confrontations between the Israeli army and angry young people. We held a conference by the Dead Sea in Jordan, with 60 educators from across the Seeds of Peace network—Israelis, Palestinians, Egyptians, Indians, Pakistanis, Americans—though Palestinian men under 50 from in and around Hebron could not join us and at the last minute several Israeli participants dropped out because they did not feel safe going to an Arab country during such a time. The following week the bodies of the Israeli teenagers—Naftali Fraenkel, Gilad Shaer, Eyal Yifrah—were found. In retaliation, the Palestinian teenager, Mohammed Abu Khdeir, was kidnapped and burned alive. We drove through demonstrations in the north. For a moment there was also reflection, as people from both sides reached out in mutual recognition and pain. Rabbis in black knocked on the

door of the Khdeir family home. Parents met in common grief. And then the missiles started up and the bombs flew in the other direction. I spoke with Israeli friends and relatives with children and grandchildren called up for the army, and with others who sat in their bathtub/bomb shelter with their kids. I realize that any way I string these impressions together will provoke reactions from various directions (these are but fragments; let's talk). On the day they buried Mohammed Abu Khdeir, we canceled an event in Ramallah. "The ground is burning," we told one another on the phone. On the way back to Jerusalem we passed a fire on the side of the road from a missile that had hit minutes before. A few days later, I was walking, Saturday late afternoon, in Sacher Park in Jerusalem. Families picnicked on the grass; lovers sat on benches; jugglers, dancers and acrobats practiced on the lawn. Then the siren blasted and the scene dissolved within moments, as I fell to my stomach by the curb.

The bombs were falling hard in Gaza when my friend Mohammed Isleem called from his basement in Shaja'ia, suddenly a name in the news. His house was damaged by a bomb that hit next door. The refrigerator was broken. The food was going bad. It was Ramadan and he had been fasting since dawn. "I have to pretend that I'm brave for the children," he explained. The social media landscape was aflame with horrible pictures of burned babies and grieving families. Entire families were wiped out. Tall apartment buildings crumbled to the ground. Mohammed and his family evacuated their house in the middle of the night. Days later he called me again from his neighborhood. "It is so terrible," he said. And then he told me about how he was working to bring more teenagers and a Delegation Leader (educator) from Gaza to the Seeds of Peace Camp.

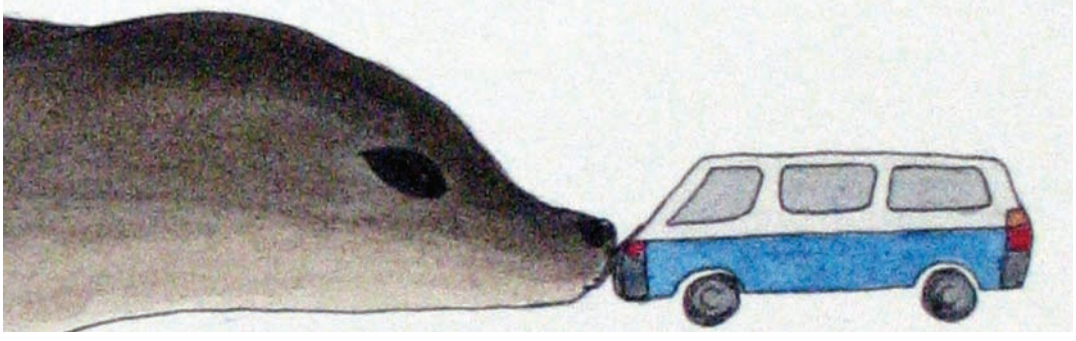
I am not saying that imagination or education can create justice and peace on their own. I know that art is not strong enough to stop bombs in midair as in cartoons. Yet without enlarged and deepening empathy, without critical attention, active learning, intellectual curiosity and creativity, people become imprisoned in unexamined preconceptions and the ruts of our lazy minds. We get caught in stunted tribalism and self-satisfied certainty. Imagine that God calls each blade of grass by its individual name. Our ability to see is far too limited, so we say "grass." We create a category. A concept. A word. From these materials we build our reality. Social theorists such as Habermas explore the social constructions that we inhabit. Habermas is a maestro of categories and concepts: he's the lead guitarist who gets the people in the stadium swaying with their lighters and cell phones out. His work in social theory grows from breathtaking imagination. But the poets and demagogues know better how to move us than the philosophers do. After the wreckage, what? After the angry facebook posts; after the funerals and screaming mothers; while the recently dead are decomposing in the ground; after the flights to Ben Gurion resume; after the soldiers go home; after people in Gaza rebuild their homes; after the Jewish and Arab citizens of Israel along with the Palestinians in Jerusalem stop expecting the sirens at any moment—what do we do? In the midst of the random attacks and palpable anxiety on lines, on buses and trains, on the streets in Jerusalem, will we learn? The gaps continue to grow. The distrust, ignorance, hopelessness and hatred fester. And what is happening in Jerusalem is not just happening in Jerusalem. Jerusalem is always more than a city: the Jerusalem that we read about in the papers is a symbol for what we as a species are up against today.

To what extent can human beings live together with dignity, equality and respect? To what extent can we engage meaningfully and non-violently with our differences and actually govern ourselves? We quote from various heroes. We speak confidently to our children. We sit in our schools and houses of worship. And then look at us acting up and acting out on the ground. When I see the ignorance spilled across the Internet I could cry. The Hebrew and Arabic words for "peace" relate to far more than the absence of conflict; they encompass ideas of wholeness, of integrity. How distant we are from peace in any real sense. There are dangers in every direction. I'm jealous of bakers who so easily taste their work.

My brother, who works in the field of "disaster preparedness," warns me about the accumulating damage of climate change. "Our way of life," he says, "is over." The ice is melting. Hu-

man population, and our consumption, grows unchecked. The conflict over resources will only get worse. It is easy to focus on thorns and nettles that inflict us while the ground shakes underneath. I wonder. Will we go out with a bang or a whimper: will we kill one another off directly or die like frogs slowly being cooked. I turn on the television in a motel room and wonder what the residents of a planet rotating around a distant star will make of what they belatedly learn about us from our radio and television waves. I discuss a movie idea with an old friend over coffee on a rainy day in New York. Aliens invade planet Earth. Based on their research, the aliens believe that Jerusalem is the center of our world: they have read the Bible, the Talmud, the Koran; they have watched the Sunday morning evangelical preachers, the rabbis, priests, and imams. So they make Jerusalem the launching pad for their conquest, and Palestinians and Israelis join together to defend humanity from this alien force. The Israelis and Palestinians retreat to the tunnels in Gaza built by Hamas for the last ditch efforts that inevitably fail. Israeli and Palestinian leaders from across the spectrum fight on the same side together. They share blankets and canned food. They sleep side by side in tunnels and ancient hideaways. Perhaps they take a final stand together at Masada. As they are picked off, as they die excruciating deaths, they realize too late how much they had in common, how different things might have been. There will of course be a romantic angle: perhaps, I imagine, Selma Hayek and Phillip Seymour Hoffman. But he died of a heroin overdose on a street where my great-aunt Sophie, her sisters (including my grandmother) and I used to walk when I was a child. "Let's think about it," my old friend says, "this film could be big."

The images in Annie's book, in Ajay's film, in the music and poetry that the group has recorded, in the connections we made, grow from the combined efforts of a group of unique, wonderful, individuals who lived together briefly at the Seeds of Peace International Camp by the shores of Pleasant Lake. For the concert, we had our first full rehearsal in Portland even as the guests arrived; after the performance we enjoyed gourmet pizza upstairs. What was that time we shared against the darkness that surrounds us? "Returning hate for hate multiplies hate, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that," Martin Luther King, Jr. said. Although I am not optimistic, I am hopeful. Hope is what can exist alongside a realistic appraisal of what we are up against. Our lives flicker and burn. When we think we have exhausted this life, another human being can ignite new possibilities. Jerusalem is everywhere. Annie's book captures a set of shared experiences. Something precious remains. And it grows. We are walking in the desert, towards a constantly receding promised land. The hope is here, and it is there (we must keep walking), just as it was for us during that "Expressive Arts; Educational Transformations" course; just as it was during practice and on stage; just as it was around the camp fire; just as it is when we meet again. We make the road by walking. The hope exists alongside the sparks of humanity that we can see if we look, like those bubbles that Habermas and I watched emerge into the Jerusalem air on Jaffa Road, like the smoke rings that emerged so gracefully from his crooked mouth. ◘



Resources for using the arts in peacebuilding

The following was originally published in the Seeds of Peace publication "The Olive Branch: Teacher's Guide," Winter 2009.

Creative Writing as a Means of Exploring Identity and Building Bridges

by Elana Bell

I recently had the priviledge of facilitating a writing workshop with Palestinian women from a small village in the West Bank. On the outside you could say we had little in common. I am a Jew from California who grew up in the very liberal, hippie community of Venice Beach.

Most of the women from the village are observant Arab Muslims, who wear the hijab and observe traditional religious customs.

But after 15 minutes together, most people would not have believed that we had just met. The women were laughing and gesturing wildly, each one more eager than the next to share rich images from her life.

In the course of that one and a half hour workshop, I was given an intimate glimpse into the complex interplay of beauty and struggle these women live everyday, in their own words.

What gave them the permission to let down their guard and share these vibrant stories with me, an almost total stranger? I believe this is the power of creative writing. It allows us access parts of ourselves and our stories that we may not even realize are right under the surface, waiting to be released. And once we see how powerful they are, we want to share them with others.

I don't believe that one needs to be a "good writer" to benefit from this experience. Each of us is full of stories and poems.We have all seen and experienced much in our lives—as mothers, as fathers, as children, as soldiers, as human beings—all of which provides a rich wellspring from which to write.

Creative writing can be used as a tool for peace-building in several ways. In the example of the workshop I described above, the purpose is to strengthen self-awareness and identity, especially among marginalized communities.When people feel valued and seen, they are much more likely to be able to appreciate or consider the "other" and their point of view.

In bi-national or "mixed" groups, the participants not only have the opportunity to validate their own identity, but they are given the chance to experience the "other" in a powerful and unique way.

Once that occurs, it becomes more difficult to stereotype and demonize the other, more difficult to commit violence against them without thinking.

In order to access the vibrant landscape of material that I have been speaking about, the writing activities must be grounded in the importance of concrete detail and of the five senses.

This is where the facilitator plays a key role. It is your responsibility to teach the participants how to use these tools in their writing. Once they make use of these techniques, the writing becomes more unique and alive. For example, if a participant says "On my street there is a man," this does not tell the reader much at all. So the facilitator might ask "How old is the man? What is he doing? What does he smell like? What makes him different than other men?"

To use all of that information would be too much, but to find the one piece of perfect, specific, information makes all the difference. "On my street the man with

one leg shuffles back and forth with his wooden crutch."

The following exercises offer a few ways to explore identity of the self and other through writing.The first exercise gives a strong grounding in the senses, so I recommend starting with that one.

In addition to focusing on the senses, participants should be encouraged to use the technique of free writing, meaning that they keep their pens moving the entire time without stopping or worrying about spelling, grammar, etc.

Remind them that whatever they write is private, and they can select later which parts, if any, they want to share.

1. Senses in a bag

Objective:
To understand and to practice the power of concrete and sensory detail in creative writing.

Materials needed:
1.Objects that will titillate each sense. For example: cinnamon, pickles, sandpaper, rice in a cup (shaken), a striking photo
2. Blindfolds (or they can cover their eyes)
3. Pens & paper

Directions:

1. Ask everyone to put on their blindfold and make sure their pen is near by.

2. Explain that they will be engaging with each object that you will bring around to them. Once everyone has experienced it, they will be asked to take off their blindfolds and write for 3 minutes, describing that object to someone who has never seen it. The key is that they must not actually name the object in their description, but what they are encouraged to do is write what it reminds them of, what it is like.

3. This process is done with each object, asking them to put on the blindfold each time.

4. Participants choose one section to share with the group. (optional)

Additional/Follow Up Exercises:

1. Take the students to a place with a lot of activity, either natural or manmade, such as a forest, or a busy market place. Ask them to write from each of the senses for 5 minutes, trying to capture as much as they can.

2. Sense poem (to be completed after above exercise).

Complete the template using the strongest phrases from the above exercise. They can put the senses in any order they choose:

In the (my)_____
I see_____
I smell_____
I taste_____
I hear_____
I touch_____
In the (my) _____

II. The story of my name

Objective:
For participants to share about their own personal, cultural, and political background in a structured and positive way.

Materials needed:
Pens & paper

Directions:

1. Participants sit in a circle and share "the story of their name": a. What is your full name; b. Who gave you your name?; c. Who, if anyone, are you named after?; d. What does your name mean (either in a particular language, and/or in terms of historical/ cultural/ personal significance)?

2. Depending on the age of the group, read a sample poem, for example "My name is Espada" by Martin Espada (appropriate for high school and above).

3. Ask everyone to free write for 10 minutes about the "story/meaning of their name." Ask them to use as much imagery/sensory detail as possible.

4. Offer one of the following templates (if necessary):
Line 1 - your first name
Line 2 - "It means," then 3 adjectives that describe you
Line 3 - "It is like," describe a color, but don't name it
Line 4 - "It is," and name something you remem-

ber experiencing with family or friends that makes you smile to recall
Line 5 - "It is the memory of," and name a person who is or has been significant to you
Line 6 - "Who taught me," 2 abstract concepts (such as "honesty")
Line 7 - "When he/she," then refer to something that person did that displayed the qualities in line 7
Line 8- "My name is," and your first name
Line 9 - "It means," and in 1-2 brief sentences state something important you believe about life.

5. Share (optional).

Sample poem:

Shawn

It means friendly, outgoing, happy,
It is like the morning sky,
It is eating Buffalo wings at a buffet,
It is the memory of Joe Workshop Heckler,
Who taught me perseverance and good humor,
When he tried my patience,
My name is Shawn,
It means I believe in laughing whenever possible.

III. Letter poems

Objective:
To empower participants with the opportunity to begin to voice, and have heard, what is important to them, their gratitude, their wishes, their fears, in a creative way.

Materials needed:
Pens & paper

Directions:

1. Read sample poem, "Dear Martin Luther King."
2. Discuss. What is going on in the poem? What stands out to you about the poem? Why did the poet write to Martin Luther King, Jr.? What is the underlying message he is trying to communicate?
3. Brainstorm a list of people you would want to write a poem to. They can be someone you know, dead or alive, a political figure, a historical figure, etc. It should be someone that you really have something urgent to communicate to.
4. Write for 10-15 minutes
5. Share (optional)

Sample Poem:

Dear Martin Luther King
by Feliciano Guerrero

I thank you for changing the world. I admire you—You stopped segregation with the power of your words. Thank you for taking a risk and giving your speech to the nation. Thank you for tearing down the "Whites Only"signs with your words. If it wasn't for you I might still be a slave today with a tool in my hand while my master lashes me with his fiery whip, sweating until I can't sweat no more, working with all my might. But when the night comes, I disappear like a ghost. Thank you Martin Luther King, for not making me a slave.

IV. Persona poems

Objective:
This an excellent exercise for allowing participants to get a sense of"walking in someone else's shoes."
Materials needed:
Photographs of people that tell a strong story

Directions:
Depending on the trust level in the group, you can allow them to try to write from the experience of the "other" in the room, or you can bring in characters from a parallel conflict.

1. Place a photograph in front of each student.
2. Ask them to begin by describing what they see (3-5 minutes).
3. Ask them to switch and write as if they are the character inside the photograph speaking to us on the outside.
4. Discuss. Which did you enjoy more: describing from the outside or writing as that character?
5. Read sample poem, "A Delicious Meal."
6. Discuss. What is happening in the poem? Who is speaking? What stood out to you in terms of the sensory details, ie.-what could you see, hear, taste, touch, smell?
7. Brainstorm a list of people you would like to write in the voice of. The facilitator can also assign this if he or she has a particular idea in mind about what participants should explore. Example: A child who lost his/her parents during the genocide in Rwanda, a soldier in Iraq, etc…
8. The participants can either write freely from

there or, if they are stuck, you can offer them the following questions to answer in the voice of their character:
Describe your greatest fear
Describe the most beautiful moment you've ever experienced
Tell your craziest dream
Who are you really, on the inside?
Describe your most painful moment
Describe your strongest desire
How do you feel about the state of the country?

9. Share (Optional)

10. Discuss (again) How did it feel to write in the voice of someone very different from yourself ?

Sample Poem:

A Delicious Meal
V.I.A., 26, Palestinian

It is not only a delicious meal
When yoghurt, rice, meat, and wheat
Are joined together.

You can hear the spatter of boiling oil,
And you can smell the pine nuts frying.
It is all in my homeland, in my blood,
In my past, and in my future.
There I can touch my mother's hand,
Smell her good fragrance,
And still hear from her the voice of
A mother's love.

It is the gathering of loved ones, friends,
Poor and rich––a gathering of different feelings––
Love and hate, anxiety and joy;
I wait for it every year.
Every day, every second, I find myself in it.
It is the meal of my beloved ones in Eid,
A time of festival.

I can see in it their faces, like strong trees
Rooted tightly to the ground;
I can hear in it the blowing of the wind
In a cold winter.
I can see the snow when it falls to the ground;
I can smell the fragrance of the flowers;
It is a spiritual and physical food.

Elana Bell is a Brooklyn poet, teacher, and peace-builder.

The next two exercises were used to generate the text in this book. They are intended for a group with a diversity of cultural backgrounds but can be adapted to the needs of any group.

Journey Making

Participants are asked to choose one of these questions, and spend 10 - 15 minutes writing. Questions invite an exploration of journey, memory, and movement in different peoples' personal and cultural histories. Sharing them in a group format or project can help to show parallels within the variety of our experiences.

1. You are on a journey and you come to a barrier. How will you get across?

2. What is your earliest memory of home?

3. Can you remember a time when you had to leave your home for another life somewhere else?

4. What is one thing you would like to take with you? What is one thing you would like to leave behind?

Poetry Partners

Poems that make use of memory and the 5 senses are read aloud. Ask participants to listen for sound, touch, smell, sight, and taste within each poem. Discussion points might include (a) attributes of the poems including the sounds of alliteration, rhyme, slant rhymes, and repetition; and (b) the mix of sensory experiences (emotional, physical) in the poems and how the physical and less physical observations can complement each other.

Ask participants to think of a place that is or was at one time home. Divide participants into pairs. Instruct partners to reflect each other's memories of home in this way:

Partner A describes their memory of home. Partner B listens and records on paper everything that they hear. (5 mins) Partners switch roles. (5 mins)

Each partner works alone from the list to choose the strongest words and images to create a poem based on their partner's memory. (5 mins)

Partners share their writing with each other, and discuss whether or not to share with the large group. (5-10 mins)

The group comes back together into one circle. Those pairs who have chosen to share one or both of their writing samples with the group do so.

ORGANIZATIONS
There are many organizations across the globe dedicated to peacebuilding through people-to-people contact. A number also focus on the arts. The following organizations and their websites offer inspiration and resources.

Artsbridge:
http://www.artsbridgeinstitute.org/
Creativity for Peace:
http://www.creativityforpeace.com/
Heartbeat:
http://heartbeat.fm/
Partners for Youth Empowerment (PYE): http://www.pyeglobal.org/
Together, Beyond Words:
http://www.en.beyondwords.org.il/about/

Seeds of Peace:
http://www.seedsofpeace.org/

The Seeds of Peace publication, "The Olive Branch Teacher's Guide," Fall 2013, is devoted to the subject of the arts in peacebuilding. You can download it here:
http://www.seedsofpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/Fall2013TeachersGuide.pdf

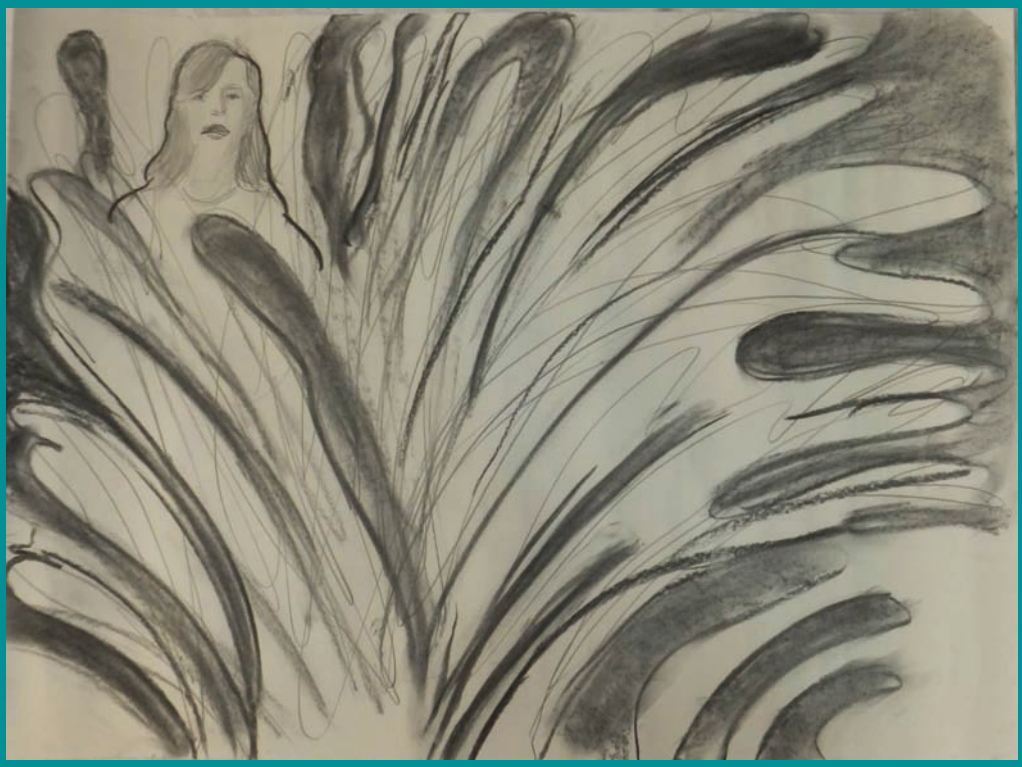
Butterfly Press is located in Harlem & North River, NY. Other titles are *Enduring Vision; the Legacy of Bertram Gross*, by Stanley Moses, 1995 and *Confronting Alzheimer's Disease a Daughter's Journey*, by Linda Simon, 2000.

Bios

Annie Jacobs writes and makes art from her experiences studying human and ecological communities. As a student and staff at the Arava Institute for Environmental Studies, located on a Kibbutz in Israel, she became fascinated by the kind of dialogue and cooperation that takes place between historical enemies when they choose to live and study together. Her participation in the 2012 Seeds of Peace Educator Program allowed her to apply her interests in coexistence and the arts.

Daniel Noah Moses is the Director of Educator Programs at Seeds of Peace. He was a CEP (Civic Education Project) Fellow and AFP (Academic Fellowship Program) Fellow in History, Anthropology, Political Science and American Studies at Yerevan State University and at Brusov State University in Yerevan, Armenia. While in Armenia he became involved in "conflict transformation" and learned about Seeds of Peace. He was a Lecturer on Social Studies at Harvard University, taught American Studies at Al Quds University in Abu Dis, and taught about "the conflict" in the Jewish Theological Seminary's Kesher Hadash Program. Daniel has a Ph.D. in American History from the University of Rochester. Although his first book, The Promise of Progress: The Life and Work of Lewis Henry Morgan (2009) might seem far from his current work, it is part of the same quest, which is also reflected in what he has written for this book. Since December 2006, he has lived in Jerusalem. He spends his summers at the Seeds of Peace International Camp in Otisfield, Maine.

Notes



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