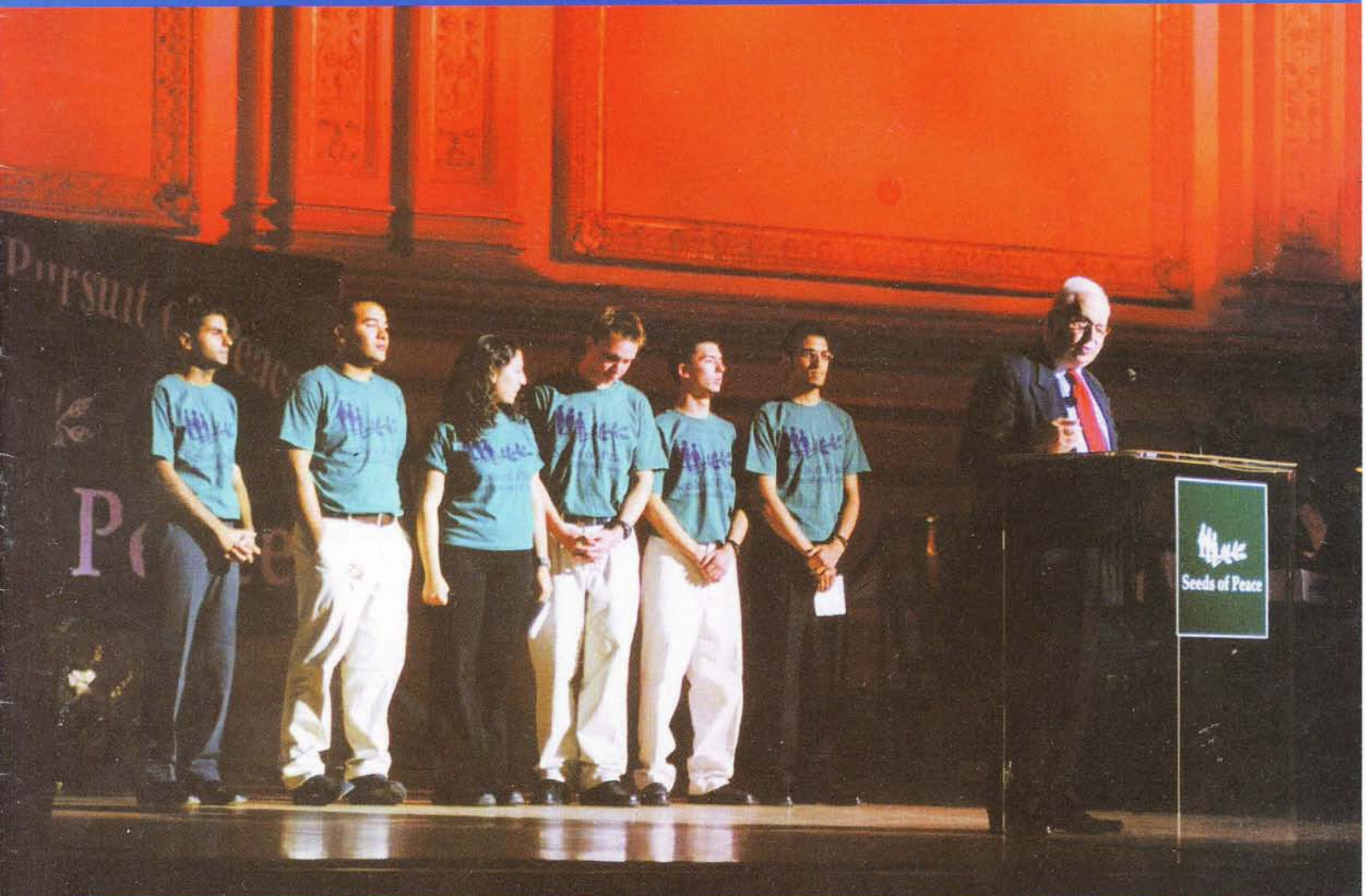


THE OLIVE BRANCH

Youth Magazine of the Seeds of Peace Program | Volume VII, Issue I | Fall 2002

IN LOVING MEMORY: JOHN WALLACH 1943-2002

KEEPING THE DREAM Alive



LEGACY OF A DREAMER: HONORING THE MAN WHO MADE ENEMIES INTO PEACEMAKERS ♦
FROM KABUL TO CAMP: AFGHAN SEEDS BUILD HOPE IN A SHATTERED LAND ♦ THE COLOR OF
FRIENDSHIP: ISRAELI AND PALESTINIAN SEEDS TEACH TOLERANCE THROUGH PERFORMANCE

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THE OLIVE BRANCH

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

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Seeds of Peace is a non-profit, non-political organization that helps teenagers from regions of conflict learn the skills of making peace. So our own camp in Maine, a safe environment

Letters

Things Look Different

This summer, for the first time, I found myself living with teenagers who live the same horrible war from the other side. I was sharing the same room, eating and talking, for almost four weeks, with Palestinian teenagers who want the same thing we do—to live in peace. We were there to try and live in peace, even for only a short time. We all knew that soon we would be home again, back to conflict and war, and that's why we had to use the time and be friends.

I changed a lot since I came back from camp. Now I can see, think and even judge this conflict from another point of view. This is why it was sad to see that my friends at home stayed in the same position. I feel that I moved forward, I advanced. During this dreamlike camp time, I made my own peace agreement with a few Palestinians. If I did, then every Israeli, Palestinian, Jordanian and Egyptian can.

I wish all Israeli and Palestinian teenagers would go to Seeds of Peace. I have no doubt that the conflict would look different to them. The campers, Palestinian and Israeli, changed and were starting to understand each other. After all we had experienced, we learned in three weeks to live side-by-side in peace.

Adir Yanko (Ashkelon)

The Beauty of Gray

"This is not a black and white world, and you cannot afford to believe in your side." When I first received the news that Israelis would accompany my trip to the Seeds of Peace summer camp, I became more anxious to go. I started to collect information about the conflict, so that I could make the Israeli doubt himself. I was preparing myself for a verbal "war." I wanted to teach these Israelis that we Arabs are right and that was enough for me.

At camp I saw that these people love, admire, and want to live in peace, just like us. So why prepare myself to "fight" others who want peace? They are actually on my side!

It is not that Israelis love war, death, or destruction. Nor do Arabs. We have many things in common. I can understand the hatred planted in the hearts of the family and friends of a person killed by a Palestinian who ignited his own hatred in a café or bus station and aimed to harvest as many Israelis as he could. On the other hand, it is not that Palestinians aim to spread sorrow and misery everywhere. They also have feelings, emotions and rights just like



John Wallach with Seeds of Peace

you. Palestinians are humans who despise insecurity, and aim for happiness as you do.

The truth is that pain blinds a person who, every time he closes his eyes, remembers a child killed by Israeli soldiers, or a family mourning over the ruins of their destroyed home. Hatred did blind us all; none of our, or your, acts are right. We have lost our humanity by fighting over a piece of land. I wonder, "What does a man gain if he did win the whole world but lost himself?" So let us repair now what has been broken, by planting the seed of love in our hearts!

"...And I believe that maybe today we will all get to appreciate the beauty of Gray..."

Malik Al-Wer (Amman)

A Seed on the Borderline

I'm a Seed. Do you know what a Seed is? It's not easy to be a Seed, especially in this situation where everything is black. We just came to SOP camp and made a white point in the middle of the darkness. Since I came back from camp I'm a new person. I see things differently, especially in the place I live, which is on the border between Israel and the West Bank. I am a Palestinian-Israeli, and I can see every action and reaction from both sides. Actually I live the two lives of both sides at the same time. It's not easy but it's very special, because I believe that everything that makes you different is the same thing that makes you special. We are all special because we are Seeds, no matter where we are from. We are the future and the hope, so keep your hearts open and welcome everyone.

Amani Jaber (Taybeh)

Undeserved Disaster

Last year was like a disaster for everybody in the Middle East. Things were happening so rapidly that I barely could take a breath while they were taking place.

It was a blur of names of martyrs, soldiers carrying guns, bombs exploding, and the depression everybody had. I was sad, lost for the first time. It was difficult to feel sad and not know where is your place in this world and what is your job.

I'm not living in the West Bank nor Israel but I felt bad. Everybody felt there is no way to have peace again after what happened.

My cousins in Bethlehem suffered a lot. They had already lost their father to cancer, and then they thought they were also going to die! Soldiers occupied their house and gave them a room which they couldn't leave. They were hungry, and scared the soldiers would shoot. No one can imagine how they suffered.

What kind of life will they live when their childhood was so scary? I don't think they'll be able to understand any reasons that they were locked in a room and kept hungry!

I don't want more innocent kids to experience what they did in April. I want everybody to live the life they deserve, no matter what their religion, nationality or anything. Help them live a life that a human being deserves to live. That's my job in this world.

Farah Al Kayed (Amman)

The Way is What Matters

What is terror? That's a good question. Deep, hard, unclear but good, because identifying terrorism is understanding the state of instability and war in the world. Each side claims that the other side is terror itself. The USA says that Iraq is a terrorist country and Iraq says the exact opposite. The case is the same in many other conflicts around the world, such as Palestine and Israel, India and Pakistan.

If we say terror is killing innocents, we are saying that every country in a conflict is a terrorist country, which does not make sense.

If we say that terror is killing innocents for no reason, then almost no one in the world is a terrorist because killers often think they have a "reason" to kill. The best answer I have is the state of fighting against peace. But this answer is leads us to another question: What is peace?

Is it just the state of no war? Can we consider Hitler a peacemaker because he wanted peace for the Germans? Some people say that all wars seek peace, which is a total contradiction.

Peace is the goal we seek. However the way of achieving peace is what matters. So we can either wait until one part kills the other and this killer will have peace, or we can co-exist and achieve peace in a harder but better way.

Peace isn't a privilege, it is our right. I don't ask for peace, I demand it. I demand that every government choose the hard path to peace, which is coexistence, negotiations and forgiveness. These are the three conditions for achieving real peace, because peace isn't just some ink on paper. Peace should come from the hearts of the people.

When this happens we shall reach a high level of civilization and at that point humankind can truly be proud of itself.

Sharif Qaddoumi (Jerusalem)

IN LOVING MEMORY

Letter from Janet Wallach, Interim President of Seeds of Peace

I am writing this letter from John's desk at the Seeds of Peace office in New York. It is filled with photographs of John with presidents, prime ministers, kings, the Pope, and of course, Seeds. In every photo John's eyes are twinkling, his round face is smiling, and his warmth is bursting through the frame. His energy was boundless, his creativity saw no barriers, his enthusiasm excited everyone he knew.

Of all his many ideas, none had the impact and recognition of Seeds of Peace. The moment he announced the concept—and it was really just an idea that popped into his head—he knew this was something big. People applauded the idea and helped with money and moral support.

Seeds of Peace started out small; just 15 Israelis, 15 Palestinians and 15 Egyptians. It's incredible to think that now there are ten times that amount—450 youngsters—at camp every summer. And instead of three delegations, this coming summer we will have youngsters from 23 delegations. Our staff of two has grown to twenty-two. Our office, once a corner of John's desk in his newspaper bureau, has grown to offices in New York, Washington, D.C. and our Center in Jerusalem. Our first exchange visit, between an Egyptian and an Israeli in 1994, has blossomed into Middle East reunions in Jordan and Egypt, international conferences in Switzerland and the US, and year-round, programs in Israel and Palestine, with regional programs for Indians and Pakistanis, the Balkans, Cyprus, and Afghanistan in the works. The 13-year-olds who were our brave original Seeds have grown into 23-year old educated adults on the road to becoming leaders.

Along the way there have been growing pains. Sadly, there are Seeds who lost hope, and who were threatened if they came to camp. Always to our frustration, there were more who wanted to come than we had space to house or money to pay for. There have been moments of euphoria, like attending the signing of the first Israeli-Palestinian accords on the White House lawn, and the dedication of our Center for Coexistence in Jerusalem. There have been times of horror: the bombs and bullets that have killed or wounded friends and family of Seeds, the attacks of 9/11, and the death of our own Seed, Asel Asleh.

Through it all, John was always optimistic. He knew profoundly that Seeds of Peace provides the answer to the endless cycles of violence and that it is the path to a better future. His greatest joy came from showing that future to you, our Seeds. He knew that one glimpse of what was possible, of what it could look like, was enough to convince you to work to bring that future about.

He was so proud of what you achieved at camp and in your efforts afterwards, that he told everyone, everyone about your courage and your determination. No head of state, no diplomat, no government official, no educator, no writer, no doctor, lawyer, engineer or businessman, no individual with whom he came in contact, could walk away without learning about Seeds of Peace and the future leaders who participate in it. And he convinced almost every single person that the most important thing they could do for the world was to help Seeds of Peace.

John is gone, but we all know that he was right and that he has left us with the most beautiful gifts imaginable: the gifts of love and hope. And he gave us the belief that what we are doing will make a difference, will, indeed, change the world. It's a great concept from a great man. I miss him, as I am sure all of you do, but his love and warmth and smiling face will never go away, not as long as we work to make sure his dream is fulfilled.

JOHN WALLACH

1943-2002

Seeds of Peace Founder and President John Wallach died of cancer in New York City on Tuesday, July 10, 2002. He is survived by his wife Janet, sons David and Michael, and the Seeds of Peace family. This Olive Branch, and all those to come, are dedicated to John in loving memory.

Timeline

- Born June 18, 1943, in New York City.
- Graduated Middlebury College, 1965.
- Foreign Editor, Hearst Newspapers 1968-1995.
- 1st visiting Foreign Affairs Correspondent, BBC, 1980.
- Started Chataqua Conference dialogue and cultural exchange program between US and Soviet Diplomats and artists, 1985.
- Editor, *We*, Daily US-Soviet newspaper in Russian and English.
- Director, PBS documentary *Israel and the Palestinians: Will Reason Prevail?*, 1980
- Executive Director, Elie Weisel Foundation for Humanity, 1995.
- Senior Fellow, United States Institute of Peace 1998.
- Founder and President of Seeds of Peace, 1993-2002.

Books

Co-authored with Janet Wallach:

- Still Small Voices, 1988.
- Arafat: In The Eyes of the Beholder, 1990.
- The New Palestinians, 1992.

Co-authored with Michael Wallach:

- The Enemy has a Face: The Seeds of Peace Experience, 1999.

Awards and Recognition

- Congressional Correspondents Award for coverage of the Camp David Accords, presented by President Jimmy Carter, 1978.
- B'nai Brith Humanitarian Award for publicizing the plight of Soviet dissidents.
- Soviet Medal of Friendship, the highest civilian award, from USSR President Mikhail Gorbachev.
- Two Overseas Press Club awards.
- National Press Club's Edwin Hood Award.
- Highest diplomatic award, Georgetown University School of Foreign Service.
- "Washingtonian of the Year," Washingtonian Magazine.
- Honorary doctorate degrees, Middlebury College and the University of Southern Maine.
- Jordanian Legion of Honor Medal, presented by His Late Majesty King Hussein of Jordan.
- 2000 UNESCO Peace Prize.

SEEDS TAKING THE LEAD



Tim Wilson, Bobbie Gottschalk, John Wallach and Asel Asleh in 1998

Two Years, No Answers: Remembering Asel Asleh

by Roy Cohen (Ashdod)

"What can I say for a mother who lost her son, or a sister who lost a brother? I stand worthless to bring them back, but powerful enough to bring their memories back by not forgetting them..."

Asel wrote these stunningly powerful words, without ever knowing they will be said in a ceremony in his memory. Two years after Asel was killed by Israeli police at a demonstration, his Jewish and Arab friends are still struggling with the loss of our friend, and the failure of the government to charge those responsible for his death.

We organized the second Memorial for Asel at the Seeds of Peace Center, to honor and remember Asel, and express our protest. The entire event was built on Seeds expressing themselves: Eli Shteinberg and Ron Roman showed the documentary film "Hayom Venora" which they made to tell Asel's story and give his family an uncensored public platform. A dozen friends spoke, read Asel's e-mails and Or Commission reports, performed on stage to remember him. We distributed John Wallach's statement from the 2001 Memorial, calling for "a full accounting of the brutal act that robbed him, and us, of the promise of a life yet unfulfilled," which we are distributing as a petition to send to the Or Commission.

The planning of the Memorial brought me back a few years. It was as if I encountered Asel all over again, thinking of how he would have wanted to be remembered. Thanks to many dear people, we were able to make the ceremony worthy of representing his memory. Asel was present on October 12, 2002, in the eyes, hearts and minds of more than 150 people who came to honor him.

In addition to the Memorial at the Center in Jerusalem, Seeds Talia Sturgis '99 (Essex, VT) and Moran Eizenbaum '98 (Rishon Lezion) organized a Memorial Service and Arab-Jewish Dialogue Forum in honor of Asel Asleh at Brandeis University in Massachusetts.



Dina Jaber

Dina Jaber ('98, Nablus) organized a Middle East dialogue forum at Mt. Holyoke College in South Hadley, MA, for Jewish and Arab students from neighboring campuses.



Ethan Schechter

Ethan Schechter ('94, New Canaan, CT) is the first Seeds of Peace graduate to work full-time as a Program Coordinator at the Seeds of Peace Center for Coexistence in Jerusalem.



Jared Willis

Jared Willis ('95, Chicago, IL) is a Fulbright scholar, researching the political activities of Arab students at Haifa University in Israel.



Koby Sadan

Koby Sadan ('94, Tel Aviv) established a Jewish-Muslim cultural and religious dialogue group for students at Yale University.



Tamer Nagy

Moran Eizenbaum ('98, Rishon Lezion) received the Alan Slifka Scholarship at Brandeis University for outstanding commitment towards Arab-Israeli coexistence.



Moran Eizenbaum

Raya Yusuf ('99, Ramallah) was awarded the prestigious Thomas Jefferson Scholarship for outstanding international students at the University of Virginia.



Raya Yusuf

Tamer Nagy ('93, Cairo) is a Junior Fellow of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace researching Democracy and Rule of Law in the Middle East, and China security issues.



Bushra Mukbil Jawabri ('95, Aroub Camp) and **Julia Resnitsky** ('00, Beit Shemesh) were jointly presented the Voices of Courage Award by the Women's Commission on Refugee Women and Children for making positive contributions towards efforts for peace.



Living with Heart

Michael Wallach tells his father's life story: How a child of Holocaust survivor earned Jordan's Legion of Honor. How one man's idea transformed enemies into friends and teenagers into peacemakers. How a father taught his son to love.

To the Seeds, In Memory of My Father

by Michael Wallach

July 11, 2002

My father was not always a peace activist. He was the son of Holocaust survivors, who had escaped from Europe only by the smallest margin of luck. He used to share the story of my grandparents' escape with me, always ending it with the phrase "its amazing that we're alive!" If you think deeply, you will recognize his voice in that sentence for yourself.

He didn't want to be a journalist at first. He wanted to be an actor. He gave everything he had to performing the role of King Lear, one of Shakespeare's most famous plays. A big New York City director named Elia Kazan watched him, stopped everyone, and said "that man is going to be a great actor someday." Six months later, he was kicked out of drama school. They said "his head was too much in control of his heart."

Perhaps that's why he approached his life with so much heart. He became a reporter, and his first big story almost got him fired. He had heard that the American President, Lyndon Johnson had considered stopping the Vietnam War, but had decided against it. John wrote a front page story. Johnson, the President, was so upset at the bad press that he asked the head of the newspaper to fire him. In the 1980's he broke a newspaper story in America about how the U.S. government had illegally shipped weapons to the Contras in Nicaragua. It was called the Iran-Contra scandal, and he won the highest award you could win for journalism, called the Overseas Press Club award.

In 1985, my father began working for peace in a different way, starting a dialogue program between U.S. and Soviet Diplomats, and an exchange between American and Soviet artists. Soon after, my father started a newspaper called "WE," which was the first paper published in both the Soviet Union and the United States. In 1993, as the Soviet Union had begun to change, he was invited to Moscow by Mikhail Gorbachev and given its highest award, the

Soviet Medal of Freedom. As Gorbachev got off the stage, my dad pulled him aside and opened up his coat. Inside were five baseballs! Strangely, he asked Gorbachev to sign them. "What are you doing, I asked?" I was incredibly embarrassed for me and my father. "Oh, I have this friend in Washington," he said "and he loves baseballs, and I owe him a favor because he gave me money to help start a new project I have..."

That new project was Seeds of Peace. In the middle of a cocktail party, he had chimed his glass, stopped the chatter, and publicly asked the Israeli, Egyptian, and Palestinian ambassadors if they would send him twenty kids each to meet the other side. Embarrassed in front of the crowd, and trusting my father (who, after all, had won all these prestigious awards), they one by one said yes. He didn't want them

was all he knew. It gave him a good salary, w benefits for when he got old. He was a mem of the White House press team the top of profession. His articles were printed around country. Seeds of Peace was a summer ca with fifty kids. But it had heart. It promi something that nothing else in the world cou a chance to end killing, to end generations sadness, to give people hope. He chose Seeds Peace.

For the past ten years he has worked night a day to make Seeds of Peace a reality. He cal hundreds of his friends, asking if they co help in any way. Slowly, he built up enou money to run the program every year. Ev June and July we would have camp. Ev September, John would go back to his frie and ask for something more. Slowly, his frie

Who could say now that my father wasn't following his heart? For my father, it was the most exciting moments of his life. He had seen the violence up close while he was a journalist. But now, thanks to your courage as well as his, my father was looking out at Israelis and Arabs standing next to each other, playing ping pong, swimming in the lake.

to even consider taking it back, so he wrote a story in the newspapers about it the next day.

Not long after, he met Bobbie Gottschalk, and then Tim Wilson. That first year, they put together camp with forty five kids. That September the kids were on the White House Lawn. "As Rabin and Arafat walked by, my dad, in his usual way, jumped out and stuffed the Seeds of Peace T-Shirts in their hands. Before they knew it, Yitzhak Rabin, Yasser Arafat and Bill Clinton were standing together holding Seeds of Peace T-Shirts, poster boys for peace. Bill Clinton grew to know Seeds of Peace and my father very closely, presenting him with a peace award in 2001.

But in 1994, my dad had to make a decision, he couldn't continue his career as a journalist and run Seeds of Peace. It was one or the other. He had been a journalist for twenty six years. It

began to rally around his effort, and Seeds Peace grew to be more and more secure.

And Seeds of Peace, of course, has grown a grown. With each one of you coming to ca and meeting kids from the other side yourself, another spirit entered the drea another heart joined this incredible family. W could say now that my father wasn't follow his heart? For my father, it was the m exciting moments of his life. He had seen violence up close while he was a journalist. now, thanks to your courage as well as his, father was looking out at Israelis and Ar standing next to each other, playing ping po swimming in the lake. When he said "le around, think how lucky we are to be here" really meant it. Now, think how much th days mean. Take some time to think about h lucky WE were to be there, with him, thank



The Wallach Family at the White House: Janet, John, Michael and David.

him, thanks to his belief that we have to live with heart and with courage. We simply aren't awake if we don't.

As my dad got older, he grew to understand this idea more and more deeply. He repeated his idea to make one friend a thousand times, because he knew that if you opened your heart to someone, then you would see life in a whole new way. You would cherish your friend, you would cherish the grass, you would cherish the lake, the songs, even the food. Most of all, you would cherish the short time that you had with the people around you, whether at camp, or at home, or anywhere you were in the world. Dad knew everyone, and he wanted to be friends with everyone.

My dad told me, as he grew more reflective about his life, that he had always felt like he had a ticking clock inside him, that time was running out. He had felt that way since he was a little boy. Perhaps that's why he fought so hard to do so much. "Just give me two years," he kept saying, "just give me two years." He died exactly two years from his diagnosis with cancer.

While the cancer grew in my dad, his sickness gave him an ever deeper understanding of what it meant to act with heart. He said he always cherished watching the coexistence sessions, understanding that everyone needed to shout and to yell and to cry and cry and cry. If only he could have cried away his cancer.

Instead, that job lies with all of us. We are his life continued, and more than that we are his dream. As I grew closer to my dad before he died, I began to understand that the greatest gift he had given me was the ability to love. Slowly, effortlessly, he had taught me how to love a

thousand things, how to love Shakespeare, how to love his favorite poet, Robert Frost, how to love newspapers, how to love acting, how to love the sky and the lake, and the trees. He taught me how to love Israelis, and Palestinians, and people from around the world. He taught me how to love taxi drivers by talking to them like old friends, he taught me how to love my mom, by seeing how deeply and passionately she cared for him, he taught me how to love Seeds of Peace, and he taught me how to love each of you. I'm not kidding, I wasn't interested in Seeds of Peace when it started, it was only through my dad that I slowly came to understand what it meant to live a life with heart. I have forgotten a thousand things, I am sure, but the one thing I will never forget is John. He didn't need to teach any of us how to love him. It came too naturally.

It is your job now to live with your heart. John can't do anything for you but spur you on, the way he always has, by repeating "go make one friend," or "breathe deeply" or "aren't we lucky to be here, to be alive" in your head. He can only urge you on saying again and again to "cherish your time here!" "You've only got three weeks!" How much he repeats those sayings is up to each of you now. And how much you live with your heart, taking chances with your heart, being courageous with your heart, those are all up to you. If you fail, and the famous director tells you "you were thinking too much," then all you have to do is go back to your heart, or remember my dad, and think about what he might tell you. He wants you to do that. He wants to help. As he always did, he wants to be involved with life, with the most exciting, courageous, heartfelt thing he could think of.

When my dad fell very ill, we took him to the hospital. He could barely speak, and began fighting and fighting. Like each of you in coexistence, he didn't want to be there, and he didn't want to think about what he was thinking about. His body grew weaker and weaker, but still he fought and fought. He tried to get out of the bed thirty or forty times, but his body wouldn't let him. His body wouldn't move. Yesterday afternoon, he fell into a deep sleep, basically unconscious. My mother and my brother and my dad's sister watched him in bed, fighting in his sleep, dealing perhaps with all of the demons in the world, from the demons that haunted his parents, to the things he had seen happen in the Middle East, to the murder of his personal friends Anwar Sadat and Yitzhak Rabin, to the demons that decided to pluck him from the earth at only fifty-nine and steal from us someone who loved with all his heart, giving him cancer in his lungs even though he never smoked.

After a night of fighting and fighting, completely unwakeable and not answering to any shouts we made, somewhere in there, he chose to fight a different fight. He fought to say goodbye to all of us. This morning, on Wednesday, he opened his eyes just a little bit. He looked at my mom and me and his sister. His friends Bernie Kalb and Aaron Miller sat by his side. They spoke to him and he understood them. We asked if he was comfortable and he nodded that he was. We sang the Seeds of Peace song to him and reminded him of all of you. My mother, his wife of twenty six years, held his hand and asked him to blow everyone a kiss. Softly, but as best he could, he blew four quiet kisses. I looked in his eye and saw a tear forming. I could tell how badly he wanted to say I love you, to everyone who had ever been a part of his life.

Keep going everyone. John is with you.

He repeated his idea to "Make one friend" a thousand times, because he knew if you opened your heart to someone, then you would see life in a whole new way. You would cherish your friend, the grass, the lake, the songs—even the food. Most of all, you would cherish the short time that you had with the people around you, anywhere in the world.

Legacy *of a* Dreamer

*I*t is really hard to know how to put in words the deep sadness that I feel. It is also difficult to come to terms with the fact that a great man, someone who has taught me so many truths and has given me so much, is not physically here. I believe that John has planted something very special in each of us seeds; some people will feel it more, or less, at different points of their life. It is through this special gift that John remains with us forever.

The last time I saw John, was in Carnegie Hall in New York at the 10th anniversary of Seeds of Peace. John's words in that event were inspiring to me as always. He talked about Seeds of Peace being a "de-tox program". John must have given such speeches over a million times, yet not once (from the times I was fortunate to hear him speak) did his words sound more convinced, more passionate, and more honest. I always admired that. It really shows how much John believed in Seeds of Peace.

build a new and better reality between Israelis and Palestinians. Living in Israel and Palestine, and witnessing all the madness that goes on here, it is so easy to give up and lose hope. To let go. But you always held on. You never gave up. And that is the main thing I will cherish in my heart. Not to lose hope.

John, you are a human being I will always admire. Your memory lives in each of your Seeds. We will grow and one day flourish. Thank you for your incredible contribution to this world.

May your soul rest in peace.

Noa Epstein (1997), Mevasseret Zion

*J*ohn deserves that we won't forget that it was him who made us Palestinians and Israelis meet for the first time, it was John that made us believe in peace, and so it was him who made us sure that we can change the world to be better, one in which we can live side by side in love and peace. I learned a lot from that strong

*I*t is with a sense of sorrow and sadness that we have to say goodbye to such an outstanding man who has been our father, brother, and most importantly our close friend. John Wallach had always taught us to treat each new challenge as an opportunity, and not as a dead end. This outstanding man has instilled in us the love of peace, humanity, and also encouraged us to have a friend from the other side.

The father of all Seeds, selfless in his service to Seeds of Peace, and in his dedication to the welfare of all Seeds, set an example that has inspired generations to become involved in Seeds of Peace.

I can't imagine Seeds of Peace without Big John, without the encouragement he gave us every day. We truly loved him. I hope that the seed that he instilled in each one of us will grow and spread peace all over the world.

May God rest his soul in peace, for he was truly a peacemaker by disposition and by deeds.

Tala Abdullah Issa (1999), Amman



John and campers sitting on the grass at camp

photo: Rula Halawani



John and Janet Wallach with the 1994 Seeds

photo: Rula Halawani

John created the opportunity for me and thousands of other Seeds to make friendships with "the other side". These friendships are the true basis for peace, and I will always cherish them. John gave me a glimpse into a better future. He created Seeds of Peace. If you can hear me now, John, or read from above what I'm writing, I want to take this opportunity to thank you. Deep from within my heart, for giving me the courage and the tools to try and

man. I learned to listen, I learned talk, I learned that the enemy has a face. You know that I will never forget that strong voice every morning at 7:30 "GOOD MORNING SEEDS OF PEACE" and then he liked to remind us to make one real friend. I can't forget how excited he used to be when singing "I am a Seed of Peace." Oh my God why should we always lose the people that we love? Life is very hard.

Manal Abbas (1999), Ramallah

*M*en have died without knowing what they were alive for. This man knew. And this man gave all of us reasons to be alive. None of us can say we were never loved because his love was so great. When you can look at each other without a veil of hatred. When you can laugh together, cry together, understand together, know that it won't be a heaven-sent gift. It'll be John Wallach's magic at work.

Amal Kahn (2001), Lahore



photos: Bobbie Garschall

John finishing one of his famous speeches at Line-Up, 1998

I am so proud that I knew such a wonderful person. I am sure all the things that he has done in his life will help us keep going in the future. I read all about his life and he was so courageous. He had a great heart.

Andmira Metani (Anda) (2000), Tirana

I would just like to extend my condolences to John's family. May he rest in peace and may we, Seeds, live up to his expectations and contribute to the realization of his far-reaching dream.

Marialena Karamatsou (2001), Athens

There is one thing I know for sure, and that is his dream has become mine, his vision of peace lives in me and grows. His courageous spirit inspired me, it gave me the courage to stand up and face everything I have feared. I send my condolences to the Wallach family and assure them that John will be well remembered.

Ahmad Khateeb (2000), Hebron

To all those who mourn the death of a great man, do not give up hope, cause if ever John dies it will be when we give up hope. My deepest condolences to the Wallach family and to all those who were fortunate enough to know him.

Shyam Kapadia (2001), Mumbai

He managed to see all the bad things, look them in the face and then move on to see past them. He wasn't just a man with a vision; he was a man with the strength and the heart to turn his vision into reality. This is how I'll remember John.

Yona Kaplan (2000), Jerusalem

John, your dream will be continued, your legacy will be carried on, and your memory will always exist with us as your dream will grow and grow, until Seeds become leaders, and Peace becomes dominant. Yours Seeds Will Become Trees!

Omar M. K. Al-Alami (2000), Amman

Now, as John is no longer here, we must accept that he was simply human, but that is what he made so clear. What a miracle to help others realize that the "enemy does indeed have a face".

Rachel Rush (2001), Portland

He taught all of us that identities & religion should not separate people, they exist to bring people together. Now, my prayers are with him. There's a saying in Turkish: God takes the people he loves early.

Eren Yanik (2001), Istanbul

Sometimes I think, no actually I know that Seeds of Peace changed my life, changed me, my perspective, the way I think and handle things. Not just about the Middle East and



"Come here!" Tim suddenly called to us from the fire pit. "You have to see this." We walked over to the line-up benches, crying on each other's shoulders. I will never forget what I saw at that moment. All the campers had spontaneously come together, forming this huge core of green T-shirts. The new Seeds were speaking out, one by one, saying things like "We'll never forget you, John", "We're living the dream", "You'll live on forever". And then they started singing the Seeds of Peace song. Watching those campers then and there is probably my proudest, and saddest, moment as a Seed of Peace.

John's impact on the world will never be forgotten. He is missed. When we heard of his death at camp, we were afraid and didn't quite know how things could go on without him. But John Wallach has touched the lives of thousands of human beings, young and old, from all around the globe, bringing them together, making miracles happen, and he will live on through each and every one of us.

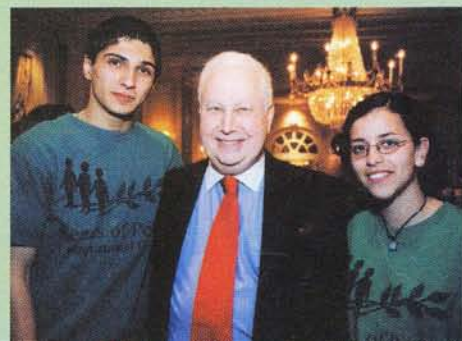
Liav Harel (2001), Haifa

politics, I am thinking about life! In a way it all comes back to John Wallach and in that sense I owe him, we all do.

Omnia Khaled Tawfik (2000), Cairo

He was an uncompromising man when it came to compromise, a man known by campers for saying "make one friend", and if anyone in camp was to point out his one friend, it would surely be John Wallach. He inspired us all, and if one day someone should look very closely in the history pages of the Middle East, John's name will be there as one of the first true believers in reconciliation.

Dan Terner (1997), Holon



Leading the Leaders

As a journalist, John Wallach cultivated relationships with world leaders. With Seeds of Peace, John challenged them to take steps to build a better future for their young generation. On October 3rd, Israeli, Arab and international leaders gathered at the United Nations to pay tribute to a man who inspired them all.



John and late Egyptian President Anwar Sadat



John and Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres



John and chief Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat

Dr. Henry Kissinger

Former Secretary of State, USA

I met John during the shadow that followed the 1973 Arab-Israeli war. At that time, Israelis and Arabs were not talking to each other, and I had to carry messages from one to the other, and if it did not work properly, I would be blamed by each side for not having delivered the message appropriately.

But John on this trip, and on many of the subsequent ones, reflected commitment, and a dedication, and faith which was only the very beginning of a very incomplete process that meant an enormous amount to me.

It was the time that America was divided over Vietnam and Watergate. The relations between journalists and officials could not be described as trusting. To meet a man of faith and dedication was an inspiration, though that is not the road that journalists generally assign themselves.

Some years later, John started Seeds of Peace. For an historian and a diplomat, the proposition that improving relations among young people can solve problems that have proved intractable for decades sounds preposterous. And yet, every great achievement was somebody's dream before it became a reality.

John invited me, on a number of occasions, to meet with the young people at Seeds of Peace. And I could see the possibilities, and experience really more than see, the possibilities that his dedication created among them.

The philosopher Emmanuel Kant wrote an essay in the 18th century, called Perpetual Peace. He said that someday humanity will

achieve eternal peace, either by human insight or as a result of a series of catastrophes that will give mankind no other choice.

What Kant wrote over two hundred years ago remains our challenge today. We will achieve peace either by catastrophes or by insight. And John's contribution will be that he provided the inspiration and the faith that is the necessary bridge between our reality and our hope.

Kofi Anan

Secretary-General, United Nations

My dear friends, many people dream of peace in the world. Few devote their lives, hearts and minds to trying to make that dream come true. John was one of those few.

John started literally with just the seeds of an idea. What he described as a 'detox program' for the hatreds that often lead to violence and terror. And so began as an initiative that allowed Israeli, Palestinian and Egyptian youths to meet and learn and approach one another. The seeds began, and took hold, and the product grew to take in young people from more zones and conflicts and tension.

By now the Seeds of Peace has brought together youths from many regions, youths from all over the world, Bosnians and Serbs, Israelis and Palestinians, Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, and many others.

Some of those young people are with us today. Their presence here speaks more eloquently than I ever could upon John Wallach's wake.

But I will say, that John's leadership, commitment and compassion here are an

inspiration to us all. I will say, that his vision and work have an enduring relevance. The world badly needs examples like his, and has never been more true than it is today.

Death took John away at a time when peace seems painfully elusive in many parts of the world, including the Middle East, where he began his Seeds of Peace. It is precisely because John had the courage to keep going, and because he knew that peace must begin with young people, who will reproduce the future itself.

That his example is so important, nobly understood that better than John's own family, Janet, David and Michael, our thoughts and prayers go out to you today.

John has left a legacy of wisdom and love which is a gift to us all. We will do our best to nurture it so that it keeps growing stronger every day.

Amram Mitzna

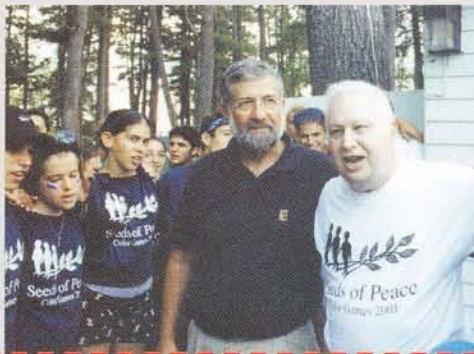
Mayor of Haifa, Israel

Mrs. Wallach, Janet, it gives me a great privilege to be here with you this afternoon. It is also a great pleasure because I do feel a part of the John Wallach family, the Seeds of Peace family.

I can't think of a more appropriate place to honor John Wallach than the United Nations. The United Nations is a metaphor for John Wallach, his vision and his commitment.

You know, some people write, some people talk, and some people act. John Wallach did all three; he wrote, he spoke and he created the Seeds of Peace, as a lasting legacy.

I am the mayor to the city of Haifa, the Israeli



John and Haifa Mayor Amram Mitzna



John and His late Majesty King Hussein of Jordan

city with the richest variety of ethnic and religious groups in our small country in Israel. And I am very proud to tell you that in our city, we have many Seeds, many Seeds of Peace graduates, Jews, Christians and Muslims. And they didn't end their relationships when they came back to Haifa. They still meet with friendship and try to create a new atmosphere, a new approach, a new future in the country.

Haifa became a middle of the people and the possibilities in the Middle East.

The last time that I met John, I was in Carnegie Hall celebrating the 10-year anniversary of Seeds of Peace. I watched him, I saw him walking, meeting with people with a very big pride. But his place of nature was the atmosphere in the camp in Maine. And I met him there. He worked there with the kids, as a father of everybody. But more, as a child, as a kid that took part, participated in all the events, all the activities. Watching, knowing each other, and being with them.

And I'd like to tell you a secret:

I came all the way from Israel to attend this ceremony, and I came here for only one to two days. But I came here because I owe John very much.

When I visited him in the camp, and we were walking between the trees in the very special atmosphere, John looked at me after a long discussion, and said, "why, if you succeeded so much to bring to the city of Haifa to be as the city of Haifa is, why don't you try to change the state of Israel? Why don't you try to take responsibility and try to lead the state of Israel to a new direction?"

And I came here just to tell John, Janet and you, all the friends of Seeds of Peace, and the Seeds of them, that I took responsibility, and I am now trying to gain the leadership of the Labor party and then the prime-ministry of the state of Israel and to lead Israel to new directions, the direction of Seeds.

John planted the seeds. It is our responsibility to cultivate the seeds so that they will grow to be trees. Trees in the Middle East that will bring a new wave, a new future to the children, to the people of the Middle East.

I promise that I will do my best, use the knowledge and the experience that I got from

John and go ahead, to bring a new future to the Middle East.

H.M. Noor Al-Hussein

Queen of Jordan

Well it's an enormous privilege and a joy for me to be here today to celebrate the life and the simple but oh so powerful dream of a remarkable peace-builder. A dream that inspired and continues to inspire hope where it

I have hope in the Seeds,
I have hope also for the
future, because John worked
hard, and we, all of us, will
work in the same direction.

is most needed. A dream of reconciliation and peace, shared by so many in conflict-ravaged communities and the world. Communities almost paralyzed by helplessness and despair of decades and almost generations of enmity. And so for our children, for enabling them to discover, and reach out to one another, with loving pure hearts and minds, and to understand, their power to transform one another, and history, thank you John.

For their families, for the hope that they have, that their children and grand-children might live in more peaceful times of their own



making, thank you John.

For urging the leaders of their communities and nations to listen to the honest voices of their young people, thank you, John.

And on a very personal level, with all my heart, for the reinforced confidence, idealism, optimism and hope my husband felt every time he met with your Seeds, or witnessed their courage and passion for peace, thank you, John.

May you both continue to inspire us to hold to the dream.

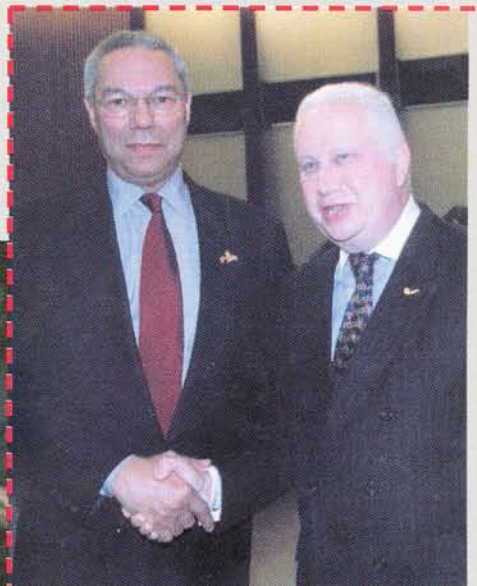
Dr. Sari Nusseibeh

President, Al-Quds University

Children are born without affiliation. As they grow older, they acquire prejudices, beliefs, whether to do with religion or nation, and further along in their lives, they then come to fight for those beliefs and prejudices. And they fight sometimes to the death.

Concerned for life, John seeing through this journey the children take, decided, especially with regard to the conflict in the Middle East, to initiate an experiment, whereby he would bring people, Israelis and Arabs, Jews, Christians and Muslims together, and them join in an experiment, an experiment in which they would make the journey back, back to their early childhood, back to discover who they really are. Back to recognize themselves as human beings. It is this journey that John has asked his Seeds to make, and it is only having made it that his Seeds will be able to make peace like we heard earlier today. It is only when Israelis and Palestinians see each other and themselves as who they really are: human beings, beyond prejudice, beyond beliefs that are acquired, that we can really have peace.

I have hope in the Seeds, I have hope also for the future, because John worked hard, and we, all of us, will work in the same direction.



The Color of Friendship

In 2000, Israeli and Palestinian Seeds created *The Color of Friendship*, original theater based on their own experiences and performed in Arabic and Hebrew simultaneously. In spring 2002, using puppets, live acting, drumming, storytelling, fantasy and fun, the cast performed to hundreds of children, spreading the ideals of tolerance, compassion and justice.

Amit Caraco (Jerusalem)

The days of the puppet show performance were not simple days. Not that reality has ever been simple here, but those days were especially hard. The tension was rising and with it the numbers of the dead on both sides. I can't help but ask myself: with all that was going on around us, was it hard to work with some of my best friends, who happened to be Palestinian Israelis? Today, I know that it was the most natural thing for me, to keep on working for peace and understanding in both our communities. It is one of the things that gave me strength and hope for much later on.

I especially remember our first performance, in front of our families. It was not our best show—we were nervous, and forgot some lines and cues. But I remember the feeling of seeing my mom in the audience seated with the mothers of Bashar, Diana, Tamer and Amir, and the hugs I received from all of them. I remember watching our parents talking and laughing together, and my beautiful little sister playing with my friends and their puppets, regardless of nationality. It was a magical evening.



Set in an exotic land far away, Gold is wrongly accused of robbing Silver. A wondrous creature helps them make startling discoveries about each other—and themselves.

Later that night, reality hit us again in the form of a bombing in Jerusalem, at a cafe where one of my best friends used to work. Thankfully, she and all the rest of my friends were safe, but it was still a very rough night. I will always be grateful to Tamer who hugged me when I cried, and for Slava and Diana, who invited me to sleep with them so I would not be alone. I spoke to my father that night, and he told me something I will never forget. He said that earlier, while we were on stage, peace had seemed so real, so possible.

And it is. That is one of the things the puppet show did. It showed people how easy it was, and how beautiful it could be.



by **Diana Aboras (Taybeh)**

I still remember vividly the hesitations, the fears, the butterflies, the enthusiasm before performing. It took us almost five months until the day of the show finally came. I didn't feel that it took us such a long time to prepare; maybe because I enjoyed it so much, especially working with such a wonderful crew; Amit, Amir, Tamer, Slava, Shira, Jen and of course our directors Khawla and Miki.

When Jen asked me to join a group of puppeteers, I knew that was just for me. Although I was in 12th grade (my last year in high school, the year that my whole future depends on), often going to the puppet meetings was my salvation, where I could escape from the pressure of exams and school. I will cherish those meetings forever. I expressed myself like I never had in my life. I just let my spirit speak freely without thinking of reactions or consequences like I usually do.

The fact that our region was witness to a lot of violence also encouraged me to participate. I wanted to do something about it, to convey a certain message to everyone, offering another voice that needed to be heard so desperately in that crazy situation.

The day before the show we rehearsed for 8 hours and were exhausted. Yet the following morning we woke up, organized the equipment, put the costumes on and waited for the kids to arrive.

The shows were so successful-both for us and for the kids. I was really surprised at the reactions of everyone. I saw the look in the eyes of the children and I knew that I made the right decision. Now I can proudly look back and say to myself that it was worth every effort.

Slava Greenberg (Afula)

It all started in the summer of 2000. A group of Palestinian and Israeli Seeds signed up for an activity at the Center called "Puppets." We began the long journey of creating a story that would include all our life experiences and beliefs. Imagine doing it with your closest friend. Then imagine doing it with someone who lives in a completely different world.

The first question raised was what do we want Arab and Jewish kids to learn from our life experiences? We all talked about our first interactions with the other side and what it taught us. The first issue was "bad" and "good"- is there ever complete good or complete bad? A person acts and his surroundings react. People don't float in the air, but are in their surroundings; they always belong to a group. We wanted to talk to kids and share our beliefs with them: not to judge, not to hate, that different means interesting and not scary. We had to detach it from us, the group of Arab and Jewish Seeds, because it was bigger than that--it was also about the kid who gets picked on for wearing glasses or because he can't write. We chose, therefore, to write about different-colored creatures that get trapped.



Israeli and Palestinian Seeds built a giant cement turtle for Haifa's celebration of coexistence: the Holiday of Holidays festival. Our turtle will live in Haifa, for Arab and Jewish children to climb and play on together.

Arab and Jewish Seeds met with youth from the nationalist Betar movement, at the request of their counselor seeking a way to separate politics and hate

Betar meets Bashar

by **"Bala" Inbal Shacked (Arugot)**

How can I trust my friend? I've never been asked to face this question, up until the day I met the kids from the Betar youth movement. To Seeds, it seems so normal to laugh, eat and sleep side by side with our foreign friends. When I slept at Amira's home in Jordan I didn't think I was doing anything unusual, until I told other people about it, and realized by the look on their faces that I did something enormous.

So, when the Betar kids asked me how can I trust Bashar, my Arab Israeli friend, I found myself speechless. "What do you mean 'how can I trust him?!' Just like I trust any other friend of mine!" But they found it hard to accept - a Jewish and an Arab Israeli sitting together, feeling comfortable with each other, trusting one another, despite the huge gap which opened between the two nations since October 2000.

When SOP suggested I meet the Betar kids, I immediately agreed. It was a challenge to me, as a former member of the movement, a person raised on its values, who spent six months of her army service as a guide in a museum which honours the memory of Betar's leaders. I thought these kids might find me unique - a Betar graduate who has Arab friends!

I was right - The kids (who reminded me very much of myself before SOP) were surprised to find out that politics and friendships don't necessarily have to mix. They were shocked to realize you can have your own opinions about the national situation, and at the same time respect your friends who have and symbolize the exact opposite opinions.

The Betar kids had a lot of questions for me, but even more for Bashar since it was the first time they talked face-to-face with an Arab teenager.

At the end of our meeting, one of the kids said he looks differently at the Arab-Israelis now, and to me - THAT IS MY REWARD.



Bala has a "permanent" commitment to Seeds of Peace!



Crossing Balkan Borders

On October 17, Seeds of Peace brought our brand of peacemaking to a different part of the world. Slavic and Albanian Seeds from Macedonia and Kosovo led the first-ever Balkan "Bring-A-Friend" encounter in Skopje, introducing friends from home to the neighbors they'd never met.

The Day We Made a Difference

by Sneska Vasevska (Skopje)

Today, the first-ever Seeds of Peace event in my country, Macedonia, took place. It is a day that I will always remember. I think every Seed who was there will remember this day when we made a difference.

Seeds from Kosovo and all over Macedonia came to Skopje, the capital, to be part of our event. Marina and I had the least to travel, just twenty minutes in a taxi to the building we rented. Igballe and Besir had to drive 45 minutes, from Tetovo. Bojan caught the 5 a.m. bus from Ohrid to be here on time. Our best surprise was seeing our friends Arta and Erblin drive in from Pristina, the capital of Kosovo. Seeing them in Skopje was a dream I had wished for since first meeting them in camp.

It was a busy day. We had to arrange the tables, sweep the floors, put photos and papers all over the walls, buy food, decorate the cake, write a small phone directory for the participants, prepare all we needed. It was fun though, listening to Erblin, with his British accent, telling me how to write the "O" from Seeds Of Peace with little colored things on the cake...

At 1 p.m., all the Seeds and their friends came... Igballe was there, with her friend Vesa; Besir brought two friends, Arben and Blerim; Marina came with Jovana, Bojan with Vesna, also Saska and Filip came from my side, and four Roma (Gypsy) kids that belong to the organization whose place we used: Alen, Nori, Aslijan and Eldat.

It all started with introductions. It was cute to hear what people knew about Seeds

of Peace. My sister Saska said that it's all she's been hearing about since last summer. Marina's friend Jovana said she already learned the cup game, and half of the SOP song.

Our delegation leader Jasna told them about the history of Seeds of Peace and John Wallach's dream. We joined her to explain all about camp, its goals and ideas. Everyone spoke so full of passion, and all the friends actually listened, asked questions, and seemed to like it. I think I heard the question "how can I get there?" more than twenty times!

We started with some games to get to know each other. We divided ourselves in groups, and every group got an egg...yeah, camp can give you some crazy ideas... every group was supposed to take care of the egg, give it love and attention, a name and a face. We continued with "human bingo," then taught them the cup game, and finished by playing a game which was suggested by Besir's friend Arben.

It was amusing to see all the "different" kids discovering many similarities, and hearing their reactions. A friend of mine came to me and whispered in my ear "Hey, Blerim likes skiing too." "So what?" I asked. "But Blerim's Albanian", he smiled, and went on talking to Blerim.

During all those games, every group was carefully watching out for their egg, except for our group, whose egg was accidentally thrown off a table...

Before leaving, all the friends and Seeds signed a big paper in different colors, which will stay as a wonderful memory of those 4 hours. They got small directories, written in all the languages. After cleaning

up, we all went to put the Seeds from Kosovo and Tetovo back on their buses. That was kind of sad. We sang "Leaving on a jet plane", but Erblin changed it to "Leaving on a bus drive."

It felt like a small camp. It wasn't as half good as camp is, but it brought back all those memories, all those amazing days spent by Pleasant Lake, all the jokes and pranks that were happening, all the beautiful moments and all the hugs when we were sad.

There's something else that I found really beautiful: This was the first time, besides a camp, that I saw Macedonians, Albanians and Roma together in one room, actually being friendly to each other. It was the first time that none of them said an insulting word towards the others, but instead couldn't find good enough words to explain their surprise about the people they met. I was amazed how our friends talked to each other. So many languages were heard in that room, and still it was a feeling of unity. Both KosovO (Slavic) and KosovA (Albanian), TetovO and TetovA, were pronounced in the same room, and for the first time in my life, I didn't hear anyone say anything bad about it.

When we were leaving, a couple of the friends thanked me, because they had "learned a lot in just four hours." They shouldn't have thanked me, because it's just as inspiring how much I learned today.

In the room where we met, I hung a paper where it was written: "It all began as one man's idea, and became a thousand kids dream." I'm part of that dream. I'll do anything for that dream to come true. Maybe it will sound non-modest, but today we made a step towards that dream.

It Happened for Real

by *Arta Osmanaj (Pristina)*

I was so happy when I got home, I could hardly sleep. It seemed like a dream. I was waiting for someone to pinch me and say "Hey, wake up," but it happened for real. We made it, me and Erblin, from Kosova to meet our friends in Macedonia. Everyone brought friends, so all of us were together: Albanians, Macedonians and Roma. We Seeds were wearing green t-shirts, so everyone became interested to know about Seeds of Peace. They looked at our photos and asked lots of questions, and we answered in the best way we could.

The fact that this meeting in Skopje/Shkup was organized in the name of peace was great. I would like to thank the Seed from Macedonia, Sneska, who took the initiative to organize it. I wish meetings like this would happen more often. We, the youth, have to put all our effort into creating an atmosphere where we can live in tranquility. I believe that this is not an unreachable goal, not an insane illusion, it is something that can and must be done.

Sharing the Dream

by *Bojan Sesoski (Ohrid)*

The first ever Seeds Of Peace event in Macedonia happened because every one of us wished from the bottom of his/her heart. We gathered together from all around the country, and showed that our friendship is real and not only phone calls and e-mails. The best surprise of the day was that Arta and Erblin came all the way from across the border in Kosovo and made our meeting international. Believe me, it is not easy to cross the borders in the Balkans.

We spent a few wonderful hours in each other's company, remembering the greatest summer ever, introducing our friends to each other with a taste of camp spirit. I often say: smile and the world will smile to you. So it was. I believe we all enjoyed it. At the end it all seemed very short, and that is one more reason why we will meet again soon. We want to share the friendship and caring we have for each other with the people around us.

It all began as one man's idea, and became a thousand kids' dream. We want to try and let our friends, neighbors, relatives, all the children in Macedonia, to live this dream. Our wish is to start planting a "tree of peace" whose shadow will shelter every kid in Macedonia in rainy days and will create a nice cool place to laugh and hang out in the hot summers.



Balkan Seeds bring their friends together in the 1st ever Seeds of Peace event in Macedonia

It was amazing how our friends talked. So many languages were heard in that room, and still it was a feeling of unity. Both KosovO and KosovA, TetovO and TetovA, were pronounced in the same room, and for the first time in my life, I didn't hear anyone say anything bad about it.

A Scream for Peace

by *Igballe Ferati (Tetovo)*

I was so anxious about this day and I thought that everything would be perfect: me, Arta, Erblin, Sneska, Bojan, Besir, Marina and there will be no worries at all.

But as I was going to the bus station with a cab the cab driver told me that during 24 hours, two people were dead and one wounded in fighting in my town. One of them was Macedonian and two of them were Albanians. For God's sake, why can't we have peace once and forever? Why? I wish I could do something to stop this. I wish I could scream so loud and somehow convince them that what they are doing is wrong. But, I can't. Even if I did, no one will listen or maybe they'll listen but they won't stop doing that. I feel so helpless. All I can do is sit and watch from the side. That is what most of us do. We are just watching, we are a kind of audience and every day one of us becomes a victim. The audience everyday is decreasing more and more... That is our reality; hopefully that it is not our future...

The Ripple Effect

It is interesting to see that was the Albanian and Macedonian Seeds' first meeting after camp, and they obviously missed each other. I prefer to explain their behavior as a consequence of the camp's influence on them. I would like to congratulate you, because you managed to make from them close friends. You have taught them how to love each other and how to destroy the interethnic borders between each other.

Arben Latifi (Tetovo)

Hi! My name is Fillip, and I was one of the kids that attended the Seeds of Peace meeting here in Skopje. I haven't been to the camp but I have heard many beautiful things about it. I'm a friend of Sneska's, and she invited me to this meeting. I must say that I'm very proud and honored that I was a part of that kind of event, because it was the first time I was actually talking and making friends with Albanians. That changed my opinion about them. I had a totally different picture in my head about the Albanian people because of all the terrorists in my country, but now that I talked to some Albanians I realized that they are nice people and that we can live together in peace. For me it was a great privilege to be there. Meeting all those people made me feel very nice. They were all friendly and I would love to find myself in such company again, because you could just feel the love in the air.

Filip Anastasovski (Skopje)

It Happened for Real

by *Arta Osmanaj (Pristina)*

I was so happy when I got home, I could hardly sleep. It seemed like a dream. I was waiting for someone to pinch me and say "Hey, wake up," but it happened for real. We made it, me and Erblin, from Kosova to meet our friends in Macedonia. Everyone brought friends, so all of us were together: Albanians, Macedonians and Roma. We Seeds were wearing green t-shirts, so everyone became interested to know about Seeds of Peace. They looked at our photos and asked lots of questions, and we answered in the best way we could.

The fact that this meeting in Skopje/Shkup was organized in the name of peace was great. I would like to thank the Seed from Macedonia, Sneska, who took the initiative to organize it. I wish meetings like this would happen more often. We, the youth, have to put all our effort into creating an atmosphere where we can live in tranquility. I believe that this is not an unreachable goal, not an insane illusion, it is something that can and must be done.

Sharing the Dream

by *Bojan Sesoski (Ohrid)*

The first ever Seeds Of Peace event in Macedonia happened because every one of us wished from the bottom of his/her heart. We gathered together from all around the country, and showed that our friendship is real and not only phone calls and e-mails. The best surprise of the day was that Arta and Erblin came all the way from across the border in Kosovo and made our meeting international. Believe me, it is not easy to cross the borders in the Balkans.

We spent a few wonderful hours in each other's company, remembering the greatest summer ever, introducing our friends to each other with a taste of camp spirit. I often say: smile and the world will smile to you. So it was. I believe we all enjoyed it. At the end it all seemed very short, and that is one more reason why we will meet again soon. We want to share the friendship and caring we have for each other with the people around us.

It all began as one man's idea, and became a thousand kids' dream. We want to try and let our friends, neighbors, relatives, all the children in Macedonia, to live this dream. Our wish is to start planting a "tree of peace" whose shadow will shelter every kid in Macedonia in rainy days and will create a nice cool place to laugh and hang out in the hot summers.



Balkan Seeds bring their friends together in the 1st ever Seeds of Peace event in Macedonia

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Filip Anastasovski (Skopje)

Camp 2002

Seeds of Peace International Camp celebrated its tenth summer with three campsessions bringing together more than 450 youth from both sides of conflicts in the Middle East, the Balkans, Cyprus, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan and the USA.



Bunk 15A poses with pro basketball players on NBA day



The traditional jump in the lake at the end of Color Games, singing "I am a Seed"

Lauren Tabak (Ashkelon)

One of the activities was called "group challenge." A Palestinian girl and I (an Israeli) decided to be partners. We chose to climb the hardest obstacle course, because we wanted to prove to ourselves that we could do it. We started climbing, using and helping each other. Suddenly we stopped. My partner wanted to go down. We talked for about ten minutes, and we decided to carry on climbing. During that climb we stopped three times just to convince each other to carry on. Eventually we reached the top. We hugged each other so hard, I almost cried. Together 40 feet in the air we sang a Seeds of Peace cheer, we were so proud of ourselves.

Never in my life did I think I would do anything like that. Now I know that ANYTHING is possible.

Dara Dajani (Jerusalem)

When we arrived at camp, I thought I would have to pretend and hide what I felt in order not to cause trouble or hurt people's feelings. That did not last long. Our "coexistence sessions" were devoted to discussing the conflict, fighting for what you believe in, and explaining to others your point of view. After a couple of sessions it became easier to understand the other point of view. The Arabs and the Israelis have two contradicting points of view about the same narrative. When you listen to the other, if you do not begin by identifying the side you are on, the narrative all of a sudden becomes the same. Both people have the same aspirations,

hopes and dreams. All of a sudden it dawns on you that they want the same thing. The Israeli side has already achieved it and the Palestinian side hopes to achieve it in the near future.

I concluded that peace is not as far away as people may think it is. It is much closer than many people think and it is going to take place as soon as the world sees both of our points of view.

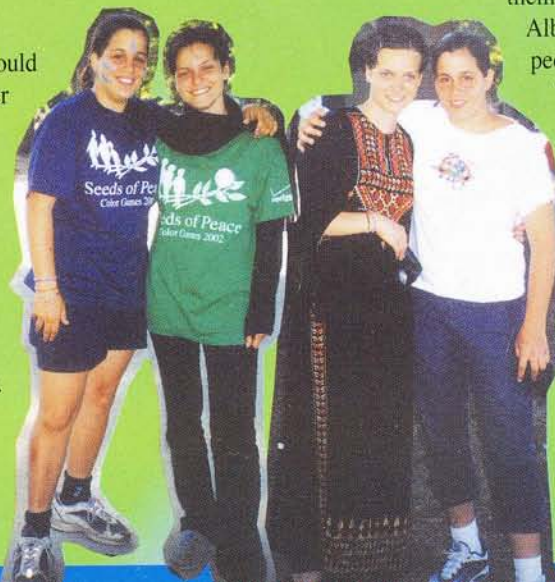
Marina Toneska (Skopje)

Camp days were filled with joy and laughter- the most beautiful days of my life. Christians, Muslims and Jews were friends- a perfect world where nobody emphasized differences. I had the most wonderful dream and I was afraid to wake up. I was right. The world is not as perfect as I thought.

At the camp I found a lot of good friends-When I came back to Macedonia I showed my pictures from camp to my friends. Some

of them asked, "How could you be friends with Albanians?" I explained that Albanians are good people and they want to live in peace as we do. They just looked at me and didn't say anything. Some understood and some didn't. In the end, I succeeded in changing their minds.

Reality is cruel, but at camp I realized it is not as our society teaches us. I know that we are all the same no matter what our religion. I'm proud to be a Seed of Peace.



Ruth and Maisa, Blue and Green

Nawar Qutob (Jerusalem)

As far as I can remember I've always been living under military occupation and lack

Maisa and Ruth, traditional colors

security. I have never experienced peace or happiness. I've never been able to feel joy and comfort without being worried about the coming hours, days and years, and whether I'll be alive or among dead people.

What I used to see and hear each and every day made me lose hope and think that I would never have the chance to live in an environment of peace and tranquility. I always used to ask myself, "Will I be able to experience one moment of peace before I die?"

At Seeds of Peace, I was able to do so. I finally know that peace is possible. Even though it was a short time, it made me draw a picture of a brighter life that can be achieved. This picture is deeply imprinted in my mind, guiding me towards the kind of life that I've always dreamt of. We shouldn't give up hope; instead we have to consider camp as a light that will lead us to our target. When I had the opportunity to talk to the other side, I became aware that it's our mission to bring peace to this land. We, the new generation, are asked to plant love between people. I will always keep in mind that no matter what happens, happiness and peace will be written in large font in the last page of the book that summarizes the events that are taking place on this holy land.

Shezray Naqshband (Lahore)

What am I doing here? I asked myself. Was this the right decision? What will everyone back home think of me? Was I being disloyal? But in due time the tangled web of confusing questions were answered and I realized that I was one of the most fortunate people in the world who had a chance to come here and become a seed of peace.

I experienced what it was like to come together and to live together in peace. I realized that we shared almost the same fears, aspirations, goals and emotions. By the end of camp my prejudices dissolved and stereotypes disintegrated and we became friends.

I never imagined that one day I would be eating with a Hindu from India, swimming with a Muslim from Palestine, playing basketball with a Christian from America and climbing rocks with a Jew from Israel. This way I was enlightened by the religious knowledge of various countries. I made amazing friends with these people who entered my life and made a difference.

Yaniv Lushinsky (Haifa)

In the space of a moment one man's life is taken away, in a heart beat one life can fade away. As a man who seeks life, who tries really hard to whisper for joy I do not deserve this "lesson" that one or two are trying to tell us. I shouldn't have to travel to some neutral, outer land to feel it. As a Seed who seeks joy I don't deserve to suffer.

So I see, God has failed us once more, so we are the ones that have to make a difference. We, I thought, have got to make a change; things, as all of you know, are not going the way they should have, and I did what I had to do to survive.

Seeds, I can honestly say that I had no idea what I was getting into, did you? It started out as my desire to make a small change in my and my friends ways of thinking, and continued with the unbelievable inspiration that one man could eventually make a larger difference.

I came to camp without knowledge of what I was doing. Was I to be Israel's representative or Yaniv's representative? I was going through a confusing week at camp with my own agenda of going back home. With my less than positive attitude of "What do they want from me?" I was



Amir, Jonathan, Momdough and Adham singing in the shower

shocked and terrified in the middle of camp to hear that my brother had been wounded in a bombing at the Hebrew University.

I felt bad. I was going around camp crying and talking to people, but in the end it helped me realize something that I haven't yet shared with anybody. We were making a difference!

You might ask me, Yaniv, what kind of a difference do you think you made? I would say, Well I changed the way I was dealing with what happened. I can't point to what exactly, but I can tell you that for me, staying a Seed has a connection to that event.

So now, what am I trying to achieve after being in camp and meeting the people there? I have to say that I don't know. Changing people's minds takes years, and making them active takes even longer.

So, you want to know why I'm staying a Seed? Everybody tells us that we are the future generation. That might be true, but the future generation also has the right to live now. We deserve our lives, Peace can be ours too. I don't want to wait so that in thirty years my children will be told they are the future generation. We deserve Peace, and if no one is doing it for us we'll do it for them, because arguing about the dead is one thing, but it is surely not helping the living.

Amr Mohammed (Sana'a)

When I arrived at camp, I saw a lot of people waiting enthusiastically to greet and welcome us. I couldn't wait to get off the bus and get know them. I remember when I met the first

Israeli. I felt something inside me telling me that this is my enemy, but

I ignored that feeling. I went and presented myself to him. It's not hard to do. At camp, each time, when I saw someone I didn't know, I would go and present myself to him and know who he was, no matter where he was from or what he believed in. We observed each other's religious services. We got to know more about these religions and what they believe.

We came to camp as strangers and some says as 'enemies', but now we are friends. It's great to have friends from other side. When I think about the word 'Enemy', I realize that there is no use for it but to express hate and disharmony. We all are human beings, we are equal in rights and dignity.





photo: Bobbie Gottschalk

Parnian and Sapna; the beauty of Afghanistan at camp.

From Kabul to Camp and Back

In June 2002, Seeds of Peace hosted our first delegation from Afghanistan. At camp, they shared harrowing stories of life under the Taliban, and built confidence to face the challenges of freedom. At home the Afghan Seeds are hard at work promoting their vision of rebuilding their shattered coun

The Woods of Maine Meet the Streets of Kabul

by Jen Marlowe (Seeds of Peace staff)

We camp staff knew little about the hardships that the 12 Afghan youth we spent the summer with had lived through at home. One of the Afghan girls told me then, "Everyone in my country is depressed. Nobody knows how to smile or laugh."

"Coming to this camp was such a shock. Nobody is like this back home. We didn't know how to behave. I did things here I can never do at home. Girls can't play sports or go swimming. When I get home, I am going to fight to change the situation for girls."

I was delighted that she had been so empowered by her experience with us. I was also scared. "Is that dangerous? What will happen if you speak out at home?" She acknowledged that it could be dangerous, but wouldn't elaborate. One Afghan Seed described coming from Afghanistan to camp as having lived in a cave, and being brought suddenly into bright light. It took time to adjust to that light. Are their lives now richer for having seen that light or has it made their situation more unbearable than ever?

I have often been nervous about the effects Seeds of Peace has on the lives of the Seeds. But the kids themselves have always proven to have the grace and strength to face and sometimes even transform the realities they live in. Did that apply to our newest charges, the Afghan Seeds? I traveled to Kabul to find out how the experience of Seeds of Peace impacted their lives back home.

The plane touched down in Kabul, taxiing past a graveyard of burnt-out, shot-up airplanes. Moments after I climbed out of the plane, Anisa, the Afghan delegation leader, took my hand and led me through the airport...into a roomful of warm hugs and Seeds! We exchanged hugs and handshakes and were speechless for a moment—none of us could believe we were seeing each other again—in Afghanistan.

Samim offered me a glass of coke. "Would you like it on your head?" he sang, imitating the comedy skit I did at camp. Right off they shouted "Hey Seeds of Peace!" They told me that since we kept them so busy at camp, they would keep me just as busy here. They will wake me with a bomb at 7 every morning, and they will post my daily schedule on the wall for the sake of poetic justice, the schedule will be in Dari (one of the Afghan languages).

In my month in Kabul, I visited their homes, met their families, and assisted them making presentations about SO





Roman's family lives in a villgae. Their home in Kabul was destroyed.

their schools. They opened and learned to use e-mail accounts. One boy rode his bike an hour and a half each way to attend every meeting we had.

Their life is hard, no doubt about it. There is electricity only at night, and not always. Running water is not in every home. Many study sitting on woven plastic mats on the ground, without desks, chairs, supplies, heat or electricity. Red and white rocks line the roads, warning of land mines littering the fields beyond. Police respond to illegally parked cars by smashing windows or slashing tires. Scores of women covered head-to-toe in *burkas* beg for money to feed their children. Many children still can't go to school—not from government policy anymore, but because many girls are forbidden by fathers who internalized the extremism of the Taliban, and many boys must work to support their families.

Still, the commitment of the Seeds to apply their camp experience to their lives at home is clear. They told story after story about helping people in their communities. Roman is teaching an English course. With his encouragement, the number of students studying English in his village has tripled. Makiz convinced her neighbor's father to let his daughter go to school, and then helped her become first in her class so she would be allowed to continue. Mujib started a project with a group of teenage boys working on challenging the culture of violence in the country. His group organized and hosted the first peace seminar on World Peace Day in Kabul. Najia started an after-school course to teach over 100 girls in her school what she had learned at camp. Weda led discussions with classmates about problems facing women in Afghan society, raising awareness and motivation to work for a change.

They still harbor well-founded fears that the future will repeat the horrors of the past. The week before I came, there was an assassination attempt on the President and a bombing in downtown Kabul. My second week there I heard a bomb explode near the US Embassy. Just hours after my plane departed, the Kabul airport was closed for several days for "security reasons."

Yet hope remains that Afghans can reconstruct their demolished country and shattered lives—that with education and a commitment to the unity of their country, they can eradicate the violence and the rule of the gun to which they have been hostage for so many years. The Afghan Seeds are trying to kindle that hope in others and make it a reality.

I feel so fortunate to have been with those twelve Seeds, seeing them on their own turf. It's rocky turf and not easy to negotiate. But it's theirs. It's their home—part of who they are and will always be. I am honored to have been able to share it with them for even a short period of time.

Azar (Afghanistan)

Now we are living in a peaceful atmosphere. Afghan boys and girls can go to school, watch TV, and listen to music. Schools and universities are being reconstructed. Refugees are returning; our telephone system is working again; the world community is recognizing Afghanistan as a peaceful country; we have freedom of speech. The dream of a civilized and developed Afghanistan has taken root in the minds of our people. In the dark age of the Taliban, we lost our national identity. We were isolated from the rest of the world. We had lost all our hopes for the future. We are very happy about the present changes. We hope that once again our country will be in line with the civilized, rich and dignified countries of the world. Without other countries, and especially America, stable peace and democracy would have been impossible. We won't forget this help and will strengthen this friendship.

Makiz Naim (Kabul)

I am a 16-year-old girl. I spent five of those years with sorrow and sadness living under the tyrannical and despotic government of the Taliban and terrorists. All Afghan youth suffered the bitter taste of imprisonment and deprivation from school. I had to stay home 24 hours a day. I thought this problem would stay forever, but I never stopped studying at home, no matter how disappointed I felt. When the Taliban left Afghanistan, we could see the sun of prosperity. We now go to school and cultivate the desire of success and happiness in our hearts. 2001 was a turning point in my life. Now I'm a young girl with enough freedom to help myself be helpful for my country.



Makiz, front left, in her classroom, hopes to be a doctor someday.



Weda Saghari (Kabul)

The Mujahadin government was a period of disappointment, turbulence, poverty, weakness of the central government, absence of law, rape, and thousands of other problems. During the Taliban, terror, horror, lawlessness, and ignoring human rights were very common, as were genocide, killing people without trial, disrespecting dignitaries and old people, dismissing people from their jobs, destroying historical monuments and sculptures, and preventing people from celebrating festivals and other traditional days.

If we use the metaphor of a wheel of life we can say there was no movement from the wheel. There was power against its movement. Life was frozen. We were pushed back at least 100 years. Women especially faced most of the executions, miseries and brutality. The diagram of misery was ascending. No one could tolerate what happened to Afghan women.

2 years ago I was living in a dark, cold and lonely night. I didn't have any hope for the future. I can use the example of a bird that has the wisdom of a human being. This poor bird was imprisoned in a cage with four pale and rusty walls. The weather in the cage was cold in the winter and hot in the summer. The food and drink were contaminated with bad taste. A bird uses its wings to fly, jumps from one branch to the next branch of a tree, sings beautiful songs and loves to fly from one spring to the next to drink. A bird loves to find its food in different spots. But this poor bird was placed in a cage with a pad lock as big as a mountain. Oh my God! It's very cruel; the bird is deprived of open air. It is real death.

But today I am inhaling the oxygen of freedom all the way to school. The thick walls of my room and my burqa can't contaminate this oxygen any more. My eyes can see the streets without being disturbed by the nets or fences of my burqa (burqa; a trap for Afghan women). I can go out of my cage...I mean my room. I can go into society. It's very important to restart the broken sequence of our education. It is the only way that will lead us to better life and prosperity, and it is the only goal of my life. I must have excellent information to be useful to my people.

Getting rid of the fatal fever of imprisonment and being released from the cages gives us hope about the future. Hope, the great treasure of our life, can lead us to prosperity. We still

photo: Masood Yusuf Zada



Najia, fearing Taliban presence, still wears her burka.

photo: Jen Marlowe



Parnian learns how to write and receive e-mail with her SOP friend.

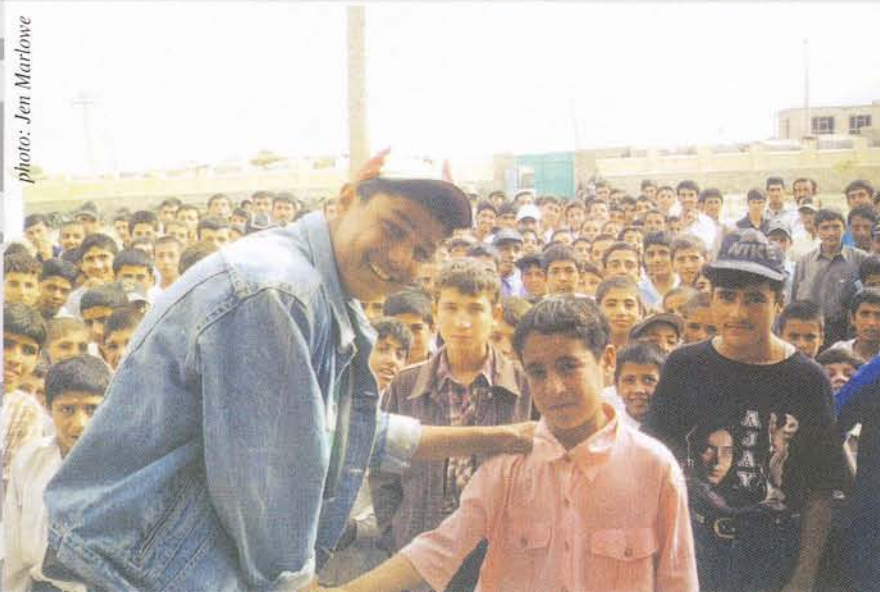
face problems of insecurity, hatred and discrimination among the nations. Poverty and illiteracy are the base of our problem. A lot of young people must work because they don't have a one to support them. Girls married during the Taliban were illiterate. But as I think about the future I can see it rising from the back of the mountains and I am waking every body up from a very deep sleep of ignorance. They are dreaming nightmares. When every body is awake, of course, they need to eat. Step by step we are going forward. I felt very fortunate to be given the opportunity to be part of Seeds of Peace, because I learned how we can together build a better world by planting seeds of humanity. We can nourish this destroyed land of Afghanistan-plowing the land, watering the dead, yellow ground and preparing it with our sweat, hard work, sincere hearts and determination. The seeds we plant will promote change, transformation and peace for all people of Afghanistan. Seeds of Peace I learned that even dried up lands can flourish.

dark hearts can emit light...when we humans put our hands in each others' and make a pact to make our world a better place.

Mir Akhdar (Kabul)

A year ago, the Taliban were here. We studied academic subjects only 4 hours a week and the rest were religious subjects. We had to wear a turban to school. I felt bad, like carrying a load all the time. One day I forgot my turban. When I arrived at the door of the school without it, my teacher sent me back home. Every day, 5 times a day, I was required to be in

photo: Jen Marlowe



mosque to pray. The Taliban drove through the street with a whip and hit anyone who was not at the mosque. Prayer is a good thing, it's a command of Islam. But for it to be a command of the government too—that is not good. One day, in our street, they told a shopkeeper, "Why aren't you in the mosque? It's time for prayer!" He said, "That's right, it's time for prayer! I am a man, I should pray. But you're a mullah. Why aren't you in the mosque when you're telling everyone else to be?" The Talib said, "You aren't Muslim! We should kill you!" We never saw him again. I am 100% sure they killed him. In any other country, they put a thief in jail. The Taliban cut off their hands. They could kill anyone. They killed our music. They killed our television. They killed our art. Many statues were destroyed. They broke 2 big Buddhas in Bamiyan, made 500 years before the birth of Jesus. Our museum was empty. I thought to myself, "How long will the Taliban be here? We live without anything, our people refugees in other countries. We must wear the turban, have long beards. What can we do?" When I heard the Taliban was gone my entire family was happy. I told everyone I saw, "Congratulations man!"

We had been in jail, a bottle. When we arrived at camp, everything was hard for us. We couldn't eat, we couldn't talk to anyone. If you take a fish out of the bottle, he will die. We were taken out of that bottle really early. We felt ashamed. A lot of us were a little sick and angry. We cried to our families, "Why are we here?" We didn't like to be in America. During camp, we got used to life outside the bottle and grew to love it. Now, Afghanistan is no longer a bottle. It is included as a country in the world. We have security, education, art, music, TV, everything. We still don't have enough food, but we have our country. Five years from now we will develop so much. I am hopeful we will have a better future.

Mujibullah Mashal (Kabul)

I was born in war. I grew up in war. I lived in war. I studied in war. Two years ago, we studied without books, qualified teachers, chairs, a roof, library, laboratory—everything that is needed by a real student. We were studying in an environment full of terrible sounds of tanks and guns, rockets and bombs. I got accustomed to studying with sounds of war.

I was hopeful for my future. God accepted our prayers. Today is the day of our dreams. Today is totally different from what was last year. Today we are free to express our opinions, work everywhere and do everything we want. We are witnessing the construction and rehabilitation of our schools. We are safe from rockets, bombs and tanks.



Samim infuses his mother with Blue Team spirit!

I brought something from camp which our society needs—a feeling of national unity. My mission as a Seed is to encourage my friends and society members to words, brotherhood, equality, and national unity. If we talk to each other about the effects of war, conflict, violence, and discrimination, we will achieve a great Afghanistan.

Now I am a participant in a project to discuss peace and develop our knowledge. We held the first seminar in our district on World Peace Day. Our program consisted of speeches, poems, jokes and dramas about peace. We hope to attract people to brotherhood, peace, and equality and to understand the effects of war.

Parnian Zalmai (Kabul)

We made remarkable progress in a year in agriculture, irrigation and education. Families pay a lot of attention to the education of their children, particularly daughters. Our families want us to become the knowledgeable people of Afghanistan. Our generation, especially the girls, was deprived of education during the Taliban. People even got mental depression from being deprived of school. My family sold my mother's jewelry to find money to educate my sister and me in Pakistan. I insist on the reconstruction of schools and the rehabilitation of our educational system, which will help us not to be deceived by the Taliban or Al Qaida. At Seeds of Peace camp, we learned a lot about the culture of America and other participant countries. The environment of my home and country is confined, but camp enlightened different parts of my mind.

Sapna Rasoul (Kabul)

We are the kids from Afghanistan and we need peace. Since I was born there was war and fratricide. At the beginning of camp, the Americans believed that the Afghans did the September 11 attack, but we explained that it wasn't done by Afghans, it was done by a number of foreigners that named themselves Afghans. During our stay, everybody was very kind with us. It was difficult for us to leave them. Because of years of war our people developed hatred and violence in their hearts. Two men often look at each other as if they are enemies. We found that people in a peaceful country like America live with calm hearts. We are tired of fighting. We want peace and we ask the countries that were destroying our homeland not to interfere and let us live in freedom.

As we walked into the mosque, my parents urged us (me and my siblings) to close our eyes and pray deeply, with heart and soul, for something we really desired. I walked for a while, thinking and praying, meditating. Then as I opened my eyes, I witnessed the most magnificent sight of my life.

RELIGION

The Ka'abah was in front of me. The sight of the House of God overwhelmed me, and tears rolled down my cheeks; tears of an emotion I'd never felt before, one I can't even describe. My heart ached with love; love for the One who had created me. Nobody around me mattered, it seemed as if I was standing in front of Allah; just Him and me. I stood there and cried, looked at His House and just cried.

The Holy Ka'abah, according to Islam, was the first place of worship appointed for mankind on earth. We believe that when the Prophet Adam was sent to earth, the angels guided him to the holiest place on the planet, the Ka'abah (it was built by the angels). However, the Great Floods in the time of Noah destroyed the Holy House. It was rebuilt by Prophet Ibrahim (Christians, Jews and Muslims are his progeny) and his son Ismail (the Prophet Muhammad was his direct descendant).

The Az'aan, or call for prayer was made, and everyone assembled in rows facing the Ka'abah. The entire compound filled with worshipers- the sight of them was so moving. The voice was absolutely beautiful; magical in the way it just captured you and penetrated through your entire body. I'd never felt as close to Allah as I did then, it seemed as if He was right in front of me. The prayer ended, and right then a crack appeared in the thick, dark cloud cover and light strained through it, giving the area a magical air.

My experience was not just the performance of the rites of the Umrah. It was understanding my faith, Allah, humanity, morality and myself. One of the main aims of Umrah is to bring together the Muslims of the world and to amalgamate them into one community. One saw black, white, wheat-colored and yellow skins stand together, shoulder to shoulder, bowing down in front of God. I met Arabs, Indians, Bengalis, Iraqis, Iranis, Malays, Indonesians, Afghanis, Africans, Turks and others whom I couldn't identify. The pilgrims exhibited such a strong bond of brotherhood that it almost seemed like a dream. It didn't matter where each one of us had come from, what our skin colors were- we were One.

My visit to the House of Allah was a new experience; I learned so much, felt new sensations and discovered so many things. As for the emptiness I described before, I think part of it has begun to fill up. My faith and belief have grown stronger, and I am more certain of who I am and what I believe in. I now know Allah and myself better!

Seeds Hnd Medhat from Egypt and Avital Gan-El from Israel joined women from 60 countries at the Global Initiative of Women Religious and Spiritual Leaders Conference in Geneva.

Avital Gan-El (Petakh Tikvah)

The central idea of the conference was that religion affects women and women affect the world. Women have significant roles in the clergy in some parts of the world, and that is something new. Conferences like these give women an opportunity to connect as leaders. Some people say that women are able to talk and listen more and shout less. I'm not sure if I agree with that. I think everyone can use their religion for peace.

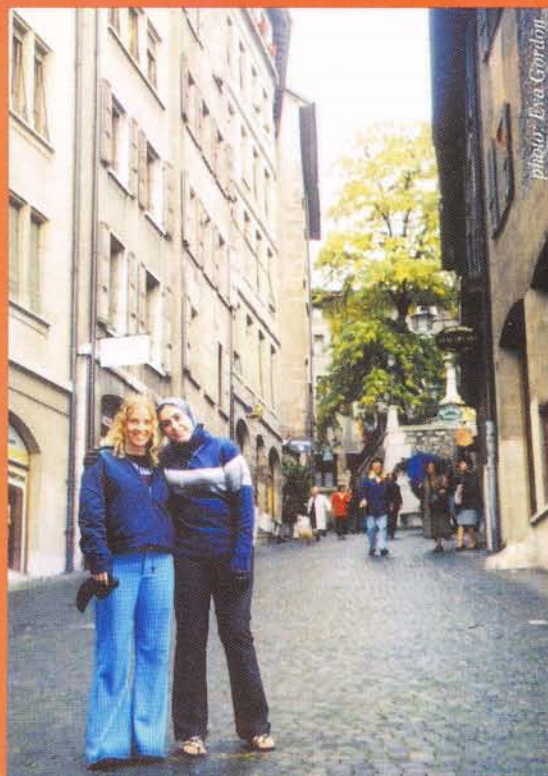
I live my life according to my religion. It's part of my personality. I believe in Judaism and I believe that Judaism is very pro-peace. You have to teach people that religion is connected to reality. You have to teach people to see things as they are and not as they are written. Here in Israel some people take the stories in the Bible literally. They believe the biblical borders and sites of Israel are sacred, and that is more important to them than other things. I believe the Bible is about specific people reacting to specific situations. You have

to think about the situation you're in, and you have to prioritize. Right now our priority should be keeping people safe and making peace with our neighbors. That's also a value in the Bible.

The conference was a good place for networking but for me it was a bit of a dream-land. There was a lot of talk about releasing anger and opening hearts. It's a nice thing to do in Geneva, but it won't help a Palestinian who just saw a soldier inside his house or an Israeli who lost a friend in a bombing. I told people at the conference that, based on my experience with Seeds of Peace, I thought these types of conferences should have a place for discussions between people from the same regions. It's nice for an Israeli to meet someone from Thailand; it's more important for an Israeli to talk to someone from Egypt or Palestine. My suggestion was to have co-existence sessions at the next conference.

I believe the Bible is about specific people in specific situations. Think about your situation, and prioritize. Right now our priority should be keeping people safe and making peace with our neighbors. That's also a value in the Bible.

Avital and Hnd hit the streets of Geneva



Students of Sorrow

Seeds from the Middle East and Afghanistan describe the devastating effects of war and ethnic violence on the lives of children trying to get through school.

History of Pain

By Alina Shkolnikov (Jerusalem)

My school, Renee Kassin, is a school that has suffered a lot. Many of our graduates were killed during army service. They were brothers of my classmates and students of my teachers. One of the 11th graders died this year in a terror attack. Several students lost parents to terror, and a direct attack on my school was stopped by security services earlier in the year.

My school has a painful history. Most students and teachers feel angry at all Palestinians, and don't believe in coexistence. It's not easy to talk politics with them. I understand where they're coming from. I lost two friends this year in a bombing on Ben Yehuda Street. Two of my friends lost their fathers. One was kidnapped and killed just because he was Jewish. The other father, a security guard, stopped with his body a 16 year-old girl on her way to bomb a supermarket. After these deaths, I joined an angry demonstration for a military response.

This summer, meeting Palestinians at Seeds of Peace camp rebuilt my belief in peace. Now, I try to convince my friends that you can't hate a whole nation because of individuals or organizations who bomb themselves. I love my Palestinian friends as I love my Israeli friends, and if, God forbid, something happens to one of them it will hurt me the same, whether in Ramallah or in Jerusalem. That's why I'm now doing everything in my power to end the hatred between the two sides.

I decided to start this work in my school, which has lost so many students to this conflict. My fellow Seed Ruba Halihel, an Arab-Israeli, and I made presentations about Seeds of Peace to two 8th grade classes.

In the first class, we explained about camp, demonstrated a co-existence session and then left them time to ask questions. We did all of that while I pretended to be Ruba, a Muslim Arab, and she pretended to be Alina, a Jewish Israeli. They were shocked when we told them the truth, that I'm Israeli and she's Arab, after we presented the opposite points of view.

The second class exploded into shouts the minute I said I have a Palestinian friend. They shouted at us throughout the presentation. One

girl in the front row asked me if I knew that people from my own school died in terror attacks this year. I said "Of course, they were my friends and I cried for them just like you."

"Then how can you stand there with her?" she asked in total disbelief. I said that Ruba, and most Palestinians, had nothing to do with the killers of our friends. Ruba explained that she hangs out on the same street, and fears the same attacks. The room was filled with tension.

When the bell rang, that same girl was the first one to come talk to us. She apologized for the way the class acted, and stayed to talk to Ruba until she was late for the next class.

My school's system of education is built on tolerance--but it doesn't reach most of the students because they are full of anger and grief and they don't know what to do about it. Our

presentation was a short way to give the students what I got at Seeds of Peace: a chance to express real emotions to the other side, and to see how Israelis and Palestinians can do something positive together about all our pain.

Counting Backwards

By Adham Ghazali (Jerusalem)

The Palestinian people have not yet recovered from the devastating effects of the first Intifada which ended in 1993. That six-year uprising negatively influenced a generation of students. Educators said it would take two decades to undo the damage. Seven years later, the second Intifada hit a Palestinian education system already below ground zero.

Banned from School in the Taliban's Afghanistan

Sapna Rasoul (Kabul)

Under the Taliban, the women of Afghanistan didn't have the opportunity of education and working outside our houses. I attended a secret school where I could learn English. Our school had only one room and our teacher was a young girl. I used to go when streets weren't too crowded. Our class was only for an hour.

A person living in the neighborhood informed the Taliban. They came to the school and imprisoned the teacher. The father of our teacher was also punished. Luckily I was at home that day. When I went the following day we were told not to come again.

Our regular school was also closed. I was very sad while I would pass my school. I was always wondering: Will they give me the chance to study again, or will we always be in the shadow of ignorance? Finally, when the interim government came into power, we found the gates of our school open for girls. I was very excited, but also scared that Al Qaida and Taliban are still in Afghanistan.

Abida Attazada (Kabul)

We were living in darkness two years ago because we didn't have the ability to go to school or study. We had a "present" from the Taliban to keep us inside our houses. I am a woman, and according to the ideology of the Taliban, women don't have the right to go to school or study or leave their houses.

Those were the saddest days. The first day I was not aware that our school was closed so I went and was stopped by the gate keeper who told me that I couldn't go to school anymore. I returned home with a heart full of sadness. I hoped that our school would be opened again but as I listened to the news about the victories of the Taliban, I became more and more depressed about the future.

When I first went back to school, I was very happy, feeling like I do on our Eid (national holy days). Now I can study outside. I can add to my knowledge and I can use my talent. I have a chance to learn and to teach. I want to teach peace to my people and I want to become a good journalist.

Israeli military checkpoints around the West Bank and Gaza Strip's cities have fragmented the Palestinian areas into isolated Bantustans. Palestinians students are the first casualties of the siege. Curfews in the cities made it impossible for hundreds of thousands of students to attend schools and colleges. So-called "popular education" (more accurately "emergency education") in Nablus failed because professional teachers do not live in many neighborhoods. There were no educational supplies in the shops, apartments, mosques and garages where the "schools" met.

The Israeli army has used some schools as bases and prisons. School equipment, laboratories, computers, electric appliances and furniture were damaged. Millions of dollars have been lost, hundreds of students killed and thousands wounded. But the worst damage cannot be estimated in numbers, but calculated in the years it will take to recover. Most qualified professors have left the country. New teachers need training, new schools need to be constructed, and a new curriculum considered--because even if the Intifada stops tomorrow, we will need many years to rebuild this foundation of our society.

Higher Education Under Occupation

By Hazem Zanoun (Gaza)

As a child, I was told that college is a life-changing experience, the place where you really grow up. That's why I was so happy to finish high school in July 2000. I chose to study at Bir Zeit, the best Palestinian university, located near Ramallah in the West Bank.

My biggest experience before college was going to Seeds of Peace camp, and being part of the Israeli-Palestinian video team that made the movie "Peace of Mind." I was looking forward to my next big adventure, but this one turned out more like a horror movie.

I chose Bir Zeit because I wanted to stay in my country. I wanted to be close to my family. Bir Zeit is only two hours' drive from Gaza. But instead of being two hours apart, I didn't see my family for two years. I live in the Gaza Strip, the coastal part of the Occupied Territories, separate from the West Bank. I was required to obtain a permit from the Israeli military to cross the border. I waited for hours in a hall of thousands of people, but it was worth it for an education.

I traveled to Bir Zeit, rented an apartment, moved my stuff and settled in to live happily ever after. But nothing runs as planned. The second Intifada started, ignited by desperation in the Palestinian street and many other factors. My short honeymoon reached its end.

The struggle between the Palestinians and the

Israelis took a terrible turn. I saw things with my eyes I never imagined I would see on TV. Massive numbers of killings, thousands of wounded, houses demolished, air attacks, checkpoints everywhere. "Step aside," "Show me ID," "Open the door, army," "Curfew is imposed," became everyday phrases. My military vocabulary was greatly enriched. Now I know personally Apache helicopters, F-16 jets, Merkava tanks, Giv'ati and Golani troops, RPGs and anti-tank missiles. That wasn't the education I was looking for.

Several times my university had to close for more than a month because of teachers and students held up by closures and curfews. Israeli troops wandered in Bir Zeit, searching houses and arresting people. The checkpoint next to Bir Zeit made going to school a living hell.

I saw it as my duty to study hard and learn as my way of supporting my people. But that was impossible with school closed all the time. By summer 2002, I felt lost, far from the people I

had not left because no one could travel because of the situation. I went to the Embassy and did my interview. Everything seemed set for me to begin my studies in September.

But September should remind you of something: September 11th, to be precise. The fear in the USA after those attacks created a new policy which delayed my visa for months of security checks. I can understand the new criteria, but I almost lost hope completely.

Finally, the visa has been issued. I missed the first semester. I'm waiting here in Gaza with my family, watching the same terrible scenes I saw in Bir Zeit. In January, insh'allah, I am finally starting a new college education. But most Palestinian students did not get my chance. They have no way out. The problem is still there, while we look in the other direction.

As for Seeds of Peace, I hoped that when I started college my relationships with friends on the other side would evolve to a new stage, more mature, discussing things on a higher



Alina, age 15



Adham, age 15



Hazem, age 19

love, under so much pressure with no way to get educated to contribute to my country--like I was breaking a promise I had made to myself. There was nothing to do but go home to Gaza empty-handed, full of disappointment that everything I had built in 2 years had collapsed.

Though I hadn't seen my family in 2 years, it was still hard to leave Bir Zeit, knowing that I will not see friends anymore, feeling that you turned your back and ran away. I also feared that at the border, I would be treated as an illegal resident in the West Bank, because I had been unable to return to Gaza and renew my permit during two years of war.

I found a way out of this dead end. I went home, and with the help of Seeds of Peace, applied and obtained a scholarship to complete my studies in the USA. The next obstacle was getting the visa. I had to get from Gaza to the U.S. Embassy in Tel-Aviv. At first, the Israeli army refused to let me, because they said I had violated their rules by being trapped in Bir Zeit. With the help of the U.S. Ambassador, we managed to convince them of the truth, that I

My school's education is built on tolerance, but it doesn't reach most students because they are full of anger. Our presentation gave students a chance to express emotions and to see that Israelis and Palestinians can do something positive about our pain.

level. But it was impossible to continue in the shadow of what happened. Like my education, these relationships were stopped or paused.

I hope only paused, because then we can press play and start again. I would like to see a different movie in my life. I don't want to see any more innocent people being killed or having their lives twisted like this; Palestinian, Israeli, American or anything.

India & Pakistan Ballots & Bullets Kashmir & Gujarat

Seeds of the Subcontinent reflect on the eruption of inter-religious violence in the state of Gujarat, and analyze the mixed message of Kashmiri elections

Friends Together through Days of Terror

Janeen Madan (Mumbai)

Another 'bandh'(strike)! Schools and offices closed; no buses or taxis on the dismally empty road. I sit in my room, looking through an album of photographs of my best friend Haya and me. Her brown eyes are pools of gentleness as she looks into the camera with a wide smile. As usual her head is covered by a scarf. "Of course," my mother explained to me years ago, "she is a Muslim. That scarf is more than her wardrobe, it is her life."

I look out at the street, which seems unnaturally quiet, almost eerie. Ten years ago this street witnessed the worst riots my city of Mumbai ever experienced. Hindus and Muslims butchered each other in a frenzied rage. I remember how I turned pale with fear when I saw the worry etched on the faces of mothers waiting impatiently to take their children home from school. My mother briefly explained that fighting between Hindus and Muslims had turned into riots all over the city. The moment we reached home, Haya's mother, who is Pakistani, frantically called to ask if Haya could stay with us until things calmed down. My mother agreed without hesitation. My father volunteered to fetch Haya since it was dangerous for Muslim families to venture out. I held my mother tightly for what seemed to be an eternity as we waited for my father to return with Haya. After they arrived, my heart went out to my best friend as she kept rushing to the phone to find out if all was well at her house.

During those days a dark cloud of smoke covered Mumbai's skyline as rioters went berserk, looting, killing and burning at will. After the carnage ended, the city tried lifting its head like a wounded animal. Shutters opened ever so slightly and buses started early in the morning. By the afternoon everything would quiet down again, as a silent panic swallowed us all. For the first time in my young life something had really rocked my world. The destruction and the thousands killed disturbed me deeply. Even months later the thought of losing my best friend haunted me every night. No, I had not lost anyone; Haya and her family are fine- but

someone had, so many had.

Recently, similar riots took place in the state of Gujarat. Islamic train on fire and hundreds of innocent men, women and children massacred. Hindus then went on a spree of killing and vandalism across the state.

It appalls me that human beings are capable of so much blood violence simply to build a temple where once a mosque stood. What matter in the larger macrocosm of life? Where we have other problems to conquer, like hunger, poverty, illiteracy and child labor, where we have so much to do to improve the lives of our people, how do we come to lay emphasis on such inconsequential things?

Today it is 2002, ten years have passed, I have nearly turned fifty. The world has just entered a new century. Instead of moving forward on important issues, our people and our erstwhile politicians repeat the same unnecessary evil acts, as though trapped in a maze. People argue and point fingers. They refuse to listen to reason and indulge in self-righteous tit-for-tat reactions which spin dangerously out of control every time.

Fear clutches at my heart as I relive those days of sheer terror, but Haya and I are still inseparable. She is who she is, and I am who I am. In this crazy world, where differences divide, we are still together and we still believe that life is beautiful.



Not Free to Think for Themselves

By Fareed Yaldrum (Lahore)

Elections in Kashmir were perhaps the most eagerly awaited event of this year. The Indian government promised free and fair elections, a step towards a bright future for the Kashmiris. Pakistani Foreign spokesmen labeled the elections "nothing but Indian propaganda." The results were as expected: controversial and vague. Kashmiris were again divided between borders and stories, not allowed to think for themselves.

According to the reports issued by Amnesty International, Kashmiris were more or less trapped; incidents were reported where Indian troops forced people to vote against their will; there were incidents where militants threatened people from going to vote. Indian troops arrested leaders opposing the elections, while freedom fighters/militants were declared responsible for the killings of Pro-Indian Kashmiri leaders.

This endless cycle of violence has been going on for the past 50 years. As I write, people are dying in Kashmir. What is the difference if it's because of an Indian soldier or a separatist fighter? It won't change that people are dying! It's a tug of war where India and Pakistan have little, but Kashmiris have everything to lose. Pakistan and India must sort out their differences for the sake of the people they both claim to represent. They must find a solution so Kashmir, a sign of hatred and distrust between the 2 countries, becomes a symbol of peace and friendship.

The Ballot and the Bullet

Shyam Kapadia (Mumbai)

The ballot is more powerful than the bullet. That is what the people of Kashmir said to the world. After suffering from ethnic insurgency, three Indian-Pakistani wars, and continuous fighting between the Indian army and terrorists (or freedom fighters, depending on your side of the border), the people of Kashmir said loud and clear: We want peace!

For the first time, the Indian Prime Minister admitted that India made mistakes in Kashmir. For the first time, the Kashmiri people were given a chance to participate in a free and fair election. International observers affirmed the election was valid. And the people of Kashmir responded. They came out in the face of threats, bullets, and grenades to choose their leaders in the true spirit of democracy.

A thumping 44% of the electorate voted. In a land ravaged by war and terror, where the Hurriyat Conference (a massive pro-Pakistan organisation) boycotted the elections, and in some parts terrorists attacked polling booths, this is a victory for democracy.

The Indian government ecstatically claimed that this was the people of Kashmir rising up against terrorists and acknowledging Indian rule. The Pakistani side declared the election a 'farce' and not the true will of the Kashmiris. The truth lies somewhere in between. The Kashmiris neither care for India's politics nor Pakistan's; they want an end to the bloodshed and war. Today when the world is busy fighting Osamas and Saddams with fancy Daisy Cutters and F-17's, the people of Kashmir waged their own war: to fight the gun with that tiny piece of paper called their vote!

A Stain on India's Secular Image

Sarah Sham (Mumbai)

The Ahmedabad-bound express train pulled out of Godhra station. Before it gathered speed, the pulling of the alarm chain halted the train. There, Muslim attackers set a compartment afire, killing 58 Hindu passengers.

The next day, Hindus attacked Muslims in nearby Ahmedabad, killing hundreds. At least 10,000 homes were torched and 100,000 Muslims left homeless. Across the state, mosques and Muslim-owned businesses were destroyed. Attackers carried computer printouts listing the addresses of Muslim families and shops which were ransacked and burned.

Nothing justifies killing innocent people, whatever the provocation. But for Gujarat's Chief Minister and many in his Hindu nationalist party, the heinous attack on the train justified a "natural reaction" against Muslims across the state. This is the secularism my country stands for?

I'm so confused. I'm a proud Muslim Indian, lost in a maddening maze of zealous Hindus and Muslims who can't coexist, who are so savage and brutal with each other I'm beginning to think that as time goes by man is becoming more primitive and animal-like. I'm a Muslim. What's wrong with me? What have I done to Hindus? Why were my relatives butchered in Gujarat, their shops burned? They haven't done anything either.

Peace is a faint island surrounded by a bloody moat, and in it swim our very own politicians. We're hanging on to that thread of a thread of hope for a future. We still pray that our generation proves more sensible than the present one, that tomorrow is a new day, that we will survive to see the day when the Democratic Republic Of India stands united.

Burning instead of Building

Ankit Gordhandas (Mumbai)

"What?!?!?!" was my reaction when my dad told me that Muslim arsonists had burned a train carriage full of Hindus who were going to Ayodhya to construct a temple in honour of Lord Rama on land disputed between Hindus and Muslims. Angry Indians blamed the Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI), the Pakistani intelligence service. This is common. If something happens in India, the ISI is blamed. If in Pakistan, the blame goes on the Indian intelligence, the Research & Analysis Wing.

The Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), the Hindu organization planning to build the temple, declared an all-India *bandh* (strike). Events took a nasty turn. Furious Hindus attacked Muslim shops and homes in revenge. The Muslims attacked in retaliation. This feeling of revenge between Hindus and Muslims make you wonder-is this the same state where Mahatma Gandhi said, "An eye for an eye makes the whole world blind?"

Gujarat is a sensitive area, known for interreligious tension. The people of this state were applauded for the unity they showed after a massive earthquake in 2001. The state had not recovered from those wounds when it was again attacked by communal disturbances.

I think the arsonists' aim was not to stop construction of the temple at Ayodhya. There was already a stay-order on the construction. Their sole aim was to create an atmosphere of communal violence. The arsonists were successful. The VHP played into their hands. Hindus as well as many Muslims were orphaned, widowed, rendered homeless. Those who rioted carried out a shameful act. I am angry to think people were indifferent to the pleas of crying widows and grieving children.

India & Pakistan are full of natural resources and the people have great intellectual powers. Yet both countries are underdeveloped. Why? We are not using our potential in the right direction. Why do you think the USA and Canada are prosperous? They have chosen not to fight. Indian & Pakistani leaders have created an evil image in the minds of their people about their counterparts. Media has played a large role in this. People in India who never met Pakistanis are prejudiced against them, and vice versa in Pakistan, as my Pakistani friends report.

I feel that we, as Indian and Pakistani Seeds, have a large role ahead of us. We must educate people about the truth in the different religions. We must help people learn to think themselves. We have to teach them not to accept everything they hear, but to find the truth themselves.

The Way Seeds Should Be

Every summer Seeds of Peace invites a delegation to camp from its host state of Maine. Every fall, the Seeds of Peace in Maine work together to bridge gaps between native and immigrant communities in their cities.

Community Controversy

by Naima Margan (Portland, Maine)

I'm from Somalia and now I'm a resident of Maine. I've lived in a war-torn country; now, I'm facing a different kind of conflict here in the United States. In Lewiston, Maine, there is tension between the people who have lived there for years, and the 1,000 Somalis that have recently moved to the area. These African-Americans have moved from other states in the U.S. to Lewiston in search of a peaceful and calm environment where they can watch their children grow up safely. They had hoped to build a future in Lewiston and have a nice place to settle.

Unfortunately, once they settled in Lewiston these African Americans were faced with being racially profiled and stereotyped. The Mayor of Lewiston stirred up the situation by writing a letter to the Somali community expressing that they were not welcome and to tell their friends and family not to move to Lewiston.

There are many misconceptions about the Somalis in Lewiston. People say that they are trouble; that they are jobless and depend on government aid. These are false rumors. Almost all the Somalis in Lewiston are citizens of America, which gives them the right to move anywhere in U.S. Second, these Somalis are well-educated and are employed or own businesses. Out of the 11,000 people receiving government aid, 55 are Somalis and most are children. Generalizations that a whole community or race is defective are misleading.

Similar situations of racial prejudice have occurred in our past and are still occurring. It is time we took a stand to educate people about these issues. We can't watch the worst of history repeat itself. The Maine Delegation of Seeds of Peace is speaking out to students, the politicians, and the people of Lewiston. We want to help them in the process of gaining understanding and tolerance in each other's cultures.

Maine Seeds in Action

by Tommi MacMillan (Portland, Maine)

A frequently asked question of the Maine Seeds is "What do Seeds do?" Tim Wilson, the camp director and Vice President of Peace developed the Maine Seeds delegation, formerly known as the Portland Project. Tim is a long-time Mainer and saw the social violence and animosity growing in Portland's community over the influx of African and Asian refugees. Portland is one of the major ports in America where refugees can come to seek a new life.

In 2000, twenty 8th graders from Portland were selected to be Seeds of Peace. At camp the Portland Project found out what Seeds of Peace are all about. After camp, they continued coexistence meetings. They went to local groups who wanted to know "what do you (Maine) Seeds do?" They met with the City Council, the School Board, and schools all around the state.

At the beginning, we 'new kids' had little idea of what camp was about. We learned quickly and a lot. Through Seeds I gained a whole new perspective that I don't see in many people my age. Now the Maine Seeds are a key component at camp. We help the counselors and we know about baseball and what the stuff is we are having for dinner.

When school began last fall, we started the presentations again. It came in a fury. Each time we gained experience in public speaking. In school, I have had many fellow students come up to me and ask "I join Seeds of Peace?" This past summer, the new group of Maine Seeds knew a lot more than the first Portland Project group, because we made a name for Seeds in our community.

I saw clearly when others didn't that it wasn't the Muslim religion attacking on September 11th, but extremists who had little to do with the vast majority of Muslims. The longer we stereotype each other, the longer we all suffer.

On September 11th, 2001 I was confused and angry, but I found myself with a different perspective than many others. When I read Seeds of Peace's response, I saw how Seeds around the world reached out to the American people offering their condolences and sympathy. I realized something clearly when other people didn't that it wasn't the Muslim religion attacking on September 11th, but extremists who had little to do with the vast majority of Muslims.

While some around me were lashing out at a nationality or ethnicity, in the fall of 2001, I was learning what Seeds of Peace is all about. We are humans and the longer we stereotype each other and hate each other, the longer we are all suffering. Where we were born or what we believe in, the longer we all suffer.



Imagining Tomorrow Today

What will the future hold for the divided Mediterranean island?
Seeds from both sides share thoughts and concerns.

Equality is the Priority

by Alp Kutlualp (Istanbul)

Approximately four decades ago, the clasped fingers of two best friends started to separate, waving their farewells in reluctance. Now, forty years later, they have started to take slow, careful, strenuous steps, attempting to reach each other, realizing that their friendship is still strong. Their worried faces reveal how both were terrified, but gradually and inevitably the worries started to disappear one by one, and were replaced by firm bonds, especially trust. This is the incomplete story of the two nations, Turkish and Greek Cypriots residing on the beautiful island of Cyprus, who have decided that reunification must be achieved and live happily ever after in peace and welfare, like the happy endings of ever fairy tale. However, some obstacles to stumble over await on the track. Therefore, the questions that fill our minds are how to overcome these obstacles, what is the possibility of a solution to commence a happy beginning for the island, and how to achieve these goals?

In my opinion, the equality between the conflicting sides must certainly be ensured. Human rights and democracy can be effectively used to find a solution. Otherwise, the so called "solution" would be compulsive and temporary; in other words, ineffective and just a repetition of the failures of the past. Since it is an undeniable fact that a key solution to every problem is ensuring equality between the two sides, recognition of the equality between the Turkish Cypriot and the Greek Cypriot nations should be our crucial priority. These two distinct communities should be recognized as two different nations, no majority or minority, as two different entities who reside in the island. Furthermore, both Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot nations shall possess the right to their self determination, the right to be able to decide upon their own nations separately. Representation of one nation on the island by the other is unacceptable since the future of one nation shall never be dependent on the hands of the other. The international community should hear the voice of that nation, not the version created by the other. To solve this conflict, the two nations should, as a start, accept the existence of the other and their equality with their side.

Imagining that the aforementioned obstacles are successfully overcome, now, I can see clearly the picture of an island in East-Mediterranean. In this island of peace and serenity, I can hear the chuckles and giggles of small children, the memory sharings of the elderly, and the splashes of the waves on the shore. I can see the two friends, hugging each other so tightly to never let go. They have learned their lesson from the past, but are not obsessed with it and now they are trying their best to benefit from the current opportunities for a better future for their children. Now, I can see two little children, one Greek Cypriot and the other Turkish Cypriot, both smiling happily at each other and moving on with their game.

Divided Past, Unified Future

by Evie Nicolaou (Larnaca)

Fear and insecurity is what the Cypriots of today feel about the future of Cyprus. Both sides, the Greek-Cypriots and the Turkish-Cypriots want their country to be united as one. They want to be able to meet freely and meet with each other. They want peace! At the same time however, they are afraid; afraid at the idea of fighting again-especially the old generation which experienced the terrible summer of 1974. Innocent people from both sides lost their homes, their belongings, their loved ones! Twenty-eight years later the feeling of resentment is still there. They want to live together again, in a peaceful environment, but the memory of 1974 keeps them back.

If you asked a Turkish-Cypriot and a Greek-Cypriot today what they believe concerning the future of Cyprus, they wouldn't be very optimistic. But if you ask the same people how they envision the future of Cyprus in 30 or 50 years, their answer would be much more optimistic and hopeful because as time passes wounds are healed. By then more bridges would have been built to bring the two communities together. More time would have been given to the Turkish-Cypriots and Greek-Cypriots to meet again and realize that it's time to leave the past in the past and work together for a better future.

I believe that no politicians and no political parties can make a difference because all their actions involve self-interest. It's up to us, the people of Cyprus, to work hard together and interact with the other side. It's up to us to make a change. The future of our island depends on the young people. And the sooner we bring the future in the present, the better!

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Poems

I'm Not There

Don't stand beside my grave and weep;
I won't be there
For it's not my home, 3 meters deep.
I don't belong to you any more,
To you nor me!
I am the soft breeze embracing
Trees, the coolness of
A midnight madness.
I'm a ringing laughter of a child
A refuge when frustration
Eats you inside.
I'm musk seeping underneath
Your skin at night.
I'm the softest light
Omitted from stars above.
I swiftly soar with golden wings,
And rest my soul on green fields
Far beyond time itself
Far beyond love or hate, wrong or right
Where the sky's blue color fills my eyes
And it's clearness my soul
I'm there, in the place that has no language
An empty place that has no space
For our words nor ideas.
I'll be waiting for you there.
Let silence speak instead of us
And let it be our language,
For we might unite at last!
So don't just sit there
And weep, I'm not under there
I do not sleep.

Nada Dajani (Jerusalem)



photo: Ned Lazarus

Nada and Alon ready to race in Color Games

God and the Angel, Orly and Nardeen

An angel was sent to Earth by God, to take care of the place He created centuries ago. The angel was so excited about the trip, for he heard it was a heaven out of the sky, and wanted to see more.

A white Unicorn awaited the angel and flew him to Earth as soon as the angel came. Three weeks later, the angel returned to the clouds, saying he had found the most beautiful place in Earth or the sky--that's what he used to claim.

No angel, unicorn or fairy, not even God knew what he meant. But the angel asked for more time on Earth and soon a whole year that angel here spent.

God wanted to know what power could there be, what beauty would keep the angel away so much time. He decided to go look for Himself, as he told the residents of the sky.

The next morning, He flew by wonders of the world, pyramids, the Eiffel Tower, saw people nice and kind. He climbed Mount Everest, and swam with dolphins, but the angel He could not find.

After days above the oceans, the fields and the towns, God found the Angel sitting on a star, and asked where was this beauty he was talking about, the beauty for which He had come so far.

The angel was surprised to see God there, said nothing, but pointed to the ground. and, God saw trees, a lake, and little wooden houses, but couldn't understand what the Angel had found.

The lake was like every lake that He'd created. There were far more beautiful woods than this. Where were Pyramids, monuments, glamour? God couldn't understand what He missed.

What was so special about this place down there? He'd seen places like this all across the land. But, the angel kept quiet, though he knew what God was thinking, and flew down to the grass, holding God's hand.

They came to the "not so special" lake, and saw girls swimming, having fun. The angel asked God to listen to their names, so He could understand. One of them was Orly, one's name was Nardeen, and they seemed to be best friends, as if they've lived in peace forever, in the same town, in the same land.

Then the angel took God's hand, and flew miles away to a place far different than the one



photo: Bobbie Gottsch

Sneska smiling at camp

before. This was the place where those two girls lived, a place of killing, and pain, and war.

They saw two girls on the road the Neighbors, but they seemed far apart. They were also called Orly and Nardeen, both had eyes blue like the sky, but something dark each one's heart.

They hated each other, hatred indeed, had taught them that the other could not be friend. They were born with that feeling, grew up with that feeling, and probably would keep it 'til the end.

"That's the difference," the angel explained. "The girls by the lake come from that same place... But they got a chance to sit by this lake together, to see that their enemy has a face."

The lake you saw looks like any other lake, but Erblin and Bojan swam in it together. The trees are green as all other trees, but Nira and Marialena will remember sitting under them forever.

It's not the food that makes meals there special, it's Yasar and Stephanos eating at the same table.

The bunks are small, but what makes them much greater is that Elad and Shadi slept in the same one, without any label.

And, what would make the entrance here beautiful, if not Gitit and Shereen singing the Seeds song together.

And where on Earth could You find another place where for friendship, your religion, your nation doesn't matter?

This is the only place in the world that was created, where Jawad and Idan, Rita and Mariam, actually coexist. And the only family created of kids from the both sides is the family, the family of Seeds of Peace."

Sneska Vasevska (Skopje)

Conquering Cancer

A twenty year-old Seed describes her successful struggle to survive the deadly disease. A voice from deep inside refused to give up on life.

By *Islam Haj-Yahia (Taibeh)*

My adventure or my challenge started in January 2002, when I went to the hospital in Kfar Saba because of weakness, horrible pain, and a high fever, expecting the doctor to tell me it is a normal weakness and you just need some rest. I tried to convince myself that it is nothing more than that.

The doctor checked me, joking and laughing, trying to calm me down. When he finished he looked at me and said: "I am sorry, but I am completely sure that it is cancer."

I looked in his eyes trying to find something to reject that, but I only found the disastrous truth. At that moment I do not remember that I cried. I laughed and said: "Please do not tell my parents now."

A day after, when I started to understand the situation, I thought that my life is ruined. I thought it was too much for me. I did not deserve this. I thought I could not handle it. I had a lot of questions: "Why it just happened now?" "Why me?" and other questions with no answers.

A voice inside me said, "These questions are nonsense. You should concentrate now on your health, on your life that God gave you as a gift. You have to fight for it. Do not give up. You can overcome this disease. It is a challenge for you, prove to yourself that you can do it."

I had a lot of painful moments during the therapy and other joyful moments. When I felt down I was screaming loudly the same words of the voice inside. But sometimes even screaming did not help, only tears could help, and again the voice inside said, "It is O.K. You are not a stone. You are a human. Cry and do not be shy, but always be strong."

It was so hard to do chemotherapy and go to University at the same time. My parents tried to convince me to stop studying for a while. I realized that I should concentrate on my health, but to stop doing things that I like and change my life dramatically was so hard. Although it was a hard decision for me, I continued to study at home. I was convinced that I could do it and I really succeeded. I am on schedule to get my

degree on time.

My faith in God, my faith in myself, and the great support I had from my loving family and dear friends just kept me fighting with no doubt that I would be the winner. Even if the disease beat me I would not be the loser because I had the best life I could ever have.

Now when everything is behind me, I can look back and think of the nightmare I have

Olive Branch just for the man of peace who taught us to be brave and fight beside him for peace. He continued his struggle while he was fighting for his life. John, now you can rest in peace, because you left us Seeds who can continue the road you started.

This is my message, and the message that I think John would send if he were alive in this short article: To everyone who passed or is

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Islam (right) at the SOP Center in Jerusalem with fellow Seed Nada Younis and Bobbie Gortschalk.

photo: Ned Lazarus

passed. I realize that it was not really a nightmare, actually it is another gift from God. I learned a lot of things from this experience. I have seen the joyful and the painful face of life that taught me to enjoy every moment in my life and there is nothing worth making me upset. It taught me to make my own decisions without thinking twice.

I decided to publish my experience in the

passing such an experience, or any other obstacle, always listen to the encouraging voice inside yourself. Reject the bad thoughts. Do not give up. Remember that there is a light at the end of the tunnel you can follow which will lead you to the sun. If the sun is far away, just keep fighting and you will arrive. Even if not, you are not the loser, because you had enough joyful moments in your lifetime.

“I may be a dreamer.



But there are 2,000 Seeds of Peace all over the world who share this dream with me.”

John Wallach, June 2002

