

# THE OLIVE BRANCH

Youth Magazine of Seeds of Peace

Spring 2012  
Volume XIII Issue I



SPECIAL FOCUS

Voices of the People  
Face to Face  
and  
Camp

INDIA  
PAKISTAN  
AFGHANISTAN



... plus hoisting sail  
with Seas of Peace





*The Olive Branch* is a magazine written, edited and produced by youth from regions of conflict who are part of the Seeds of Peace program. All opinions expressed on these pages are those of the Seeds who write for and edit the magazine and are not necessarily shared by Seeds of Peace, the United States Department of State, *The Olive Branch*, or its staff.

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Seeds of Peace is a non-profit, non-political organization that inspires and equips new generations of leaders from regions of conflict with the relationships, understanding, and skills needed to advance lasting peace.

Since 1993, Seeds of Peace has set the standard in international peace-building by providing exceptional young people and educators from regions of conflict with an otherwise impossible opportunity to meet their historic enemies face-to-face at our International Camp in Maine. We then build on their extra-ordinary and critical relationships and understanding through year-round local programs.

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# From the editors

IT HAS BEEN A WHILE SINCE WE LAST PUBLISHED an issue of the Olive Branch, and we are very excited to present to you this edition, full of reports and reflections from Seeds of Peace members.

This issue focuses on what our peers in South Asia have been doing. Seeds from Mumbai, Lahore and Kabul are among our most active members and are constantly seeking to break down barriers within and between their societies.

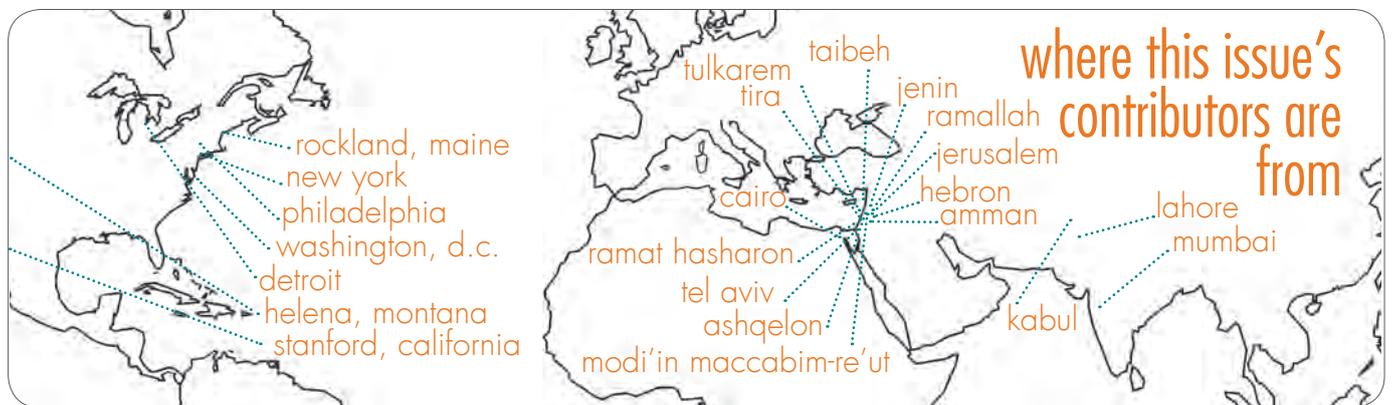
Seeds of Peace is about to enter its 20th year. Since 1993, when a few dozen young boys from the Middle East attended Camp, this organization has grown to include hundreds and then thousands of young people from around the world.

These Seeds not only go through a life-changing experience themselves, but have the ability to help shape the minds of people in their home countries regarding the conflict most of them were born into and change their communities for the better. We are delighted to see that so many Seeds choose to turn their three-week Camp experience into something much larger.



We have been active members of Seeds of Peace for over a decade (yes, we're old!), and we hope the stories you read in this edition will encourage you to take part in and support this amazing, constantly growing organization.

*Lama El.*



## KEY SEEDS OF PEACE TERMS

**SEEDS:** Members of Seeds of Peace whose participation begins when they attend the organization's summer camp in the US state of Maine.

**DELEGATIONS:** Seeds attend Camp as members of an official delegation. This year, those delegations are from Egypt, India, Israel, Jordan, Pakistan, Palestine, the United States, Maine and Syracuse (New York).

**DIALOGUE:** Daily 105-minute sessions run by professional facilitators during which Seeds share their own perspectives on conflict-related issues and listen to campers from the "other side" of the conflict.

**GROUP CHALLENGE:** A series of activities that parallels the dialogue process and uses an array of

high and low ropes course elements to challenge Seeds and reinforce trust and communication.

**COLOR GAMES:** A three-day period of athletic and artistic competition between two teams—Green and Blue—each consisting of members of many delegations. Color Games intensifies all aspects of the Seeds of Peace program and takes teamwork, trust, communication and leadership to a new level.

**BINATIONAL:** A Seeds of Peace event held back home in the conflict region for Seeds from two delegations. This type of event will usually include dialogue sessions.

**UNINATIONAL:** An event for Seeds from only one delegation. This type of event allows Seeds to address issues within their communities and prepare for binational (or multinational) activities.

# Programs



multinational | petra



uninational | lahore



multinational | atlantic



multinational | london



uninational | lahore



uninational | ramallah



multinational | mumbai



multinational | mumbai



binational | jerusalem



uninational | kabul



binational | portland



binational | jerusalem



uninational | detroit



uninational | hebron



binational | jerusalem



multinational | maine

4



multinational | aqaba



uninational | haifa



binational | tel aviv



binational | jerusalem



binational | jerusalem



binational | haifa



uninational | lahore



binational | lahore



binational | jerusalem



uninational | lahore



binational | tel aviv



binational | jerusalem



binational | jerusalem



uninational | lahore



uninational | kabul



multinational | white house



binational | haifa



binational | haifa



multinational | mumbai



uninational | haifa



uninational | lahore

# Letters

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## CHANGING MINDS

After participating in the eye-opening experience of Camp, it felt more like an obligation than a task to spread the message of Seeds of Peace. But some minds are easier to change than others.

After numerous attempts, I found myself unable to change the mind of one particularly persistent friend of mine. All reasoning, all efforts failed, creating no impact at all.

I didn't want to tell him what to think; I knew that no one telling me what to think made any difference. But every insult against Pakistan and Pakistanis sent a shot of pain searing through my heart; each racist joke burned my ears, filling every fiber in my body with rage.

I felt like taking him by the shoulders, shaking him, and saying, "Wake up! Open up your mind! Can't you see how much you're missing out on because you're scared of what will happen if you don't have enemies to blame?"

After hours of constant arguing, we would call it a day. A sleepless night guaranteed, I would lie on my bed thinking: if I can't change the mind of one headstrong 14 year old, how am I supposed to convince the whole of India to see beyond what their brains have been hardwired to think all these years? Sometimes I wish all the world had been to Camp. It would certainly make my life easier. But the best things aren't easy—you have to work for them. And peace is certainly something worth working for.

A wise Seed once said, "We can't change what we are, but we can change the way we live already, we can take our lives in our hands once again, we can move from a position as a viewer of this game to a player. We are no more asked to watch; we can make a change."

**Ruxshin (Mumbai)**

## SEEING THE FULL PICTURE

Initially, the idea of going to America with Israelis was scary. Israelis were people I only saw in military jeeps, threatening me with guns in my own town.

But then I grew curious. I wanted to face my enemy, to face the people behind the wars against my people, and to learn what they think, how they think—to understand everything about them.

At Camp, I started to distinguish between two kinds of people within the same system. Not all Israelis are the same as the ones who, back home, endanger my life with their weapons. I found this amazing and odd and interesting all at the same time.

With each and every Israeli I met, I managed to communicate not with violence but with words, something that is very unusual in real life.

What I learned at Camp would have taken me years and years to understand on my own. I now believe that what Israelis and Palestinians each see isn't the complete picture. But Seeds of Peace shows us the full image.

I never thought that peace was even on the table. But through Seeds of Peace, I managed to achieve with Israelis what our governments haven't in 63 years!

**George (Jenin)**

## SUMMER WITH THE ENEMY

It took me fifteen years to meet the enemy, only to find that the enemy was me. Just by being who I am through my heritage, I was thought of as the enemy, both in other people's perceptions and in my own unacknowledged prejudices against them. First I reacted with confusion, then anger, and then finally with empathy and the beginnings of understanding.

What sets Seeds of Peace apart from other summer camps are the daily 105 minute dialogue sessions in which campers from each conflict region participate. During these sessions, 15 to 20 campers sit in a circle in a hut discussing the politics, histories, and identities of groups that shape their conflict.

While I still do not agree with many of his views, I developed a much better understanding of why the Gazan who declared he would not be friends with Israelis did so after he elaborated on the horrors he faced during the 2009 Gaza War.

During the last few days of Camp, I felt sad and anxious thinking about the lives of some of my new friends and the daily challenges they would face upon their return home—the kind of challenges most of us never have to face in the US—from checkpoints and food and water shortages, to fears of bombs blowing up, to losing family members and friends in war.

PHOTO CREDITS: BOBBIE GOTTSCHALK, MADELEINE PRYOR



OLIVIA (HELENA, MONTANA)

I am more convinced than ever that no matter how great the differences that divide us—religious, ethnic, racial, national, etc.—what we have in common is greater. When we lose this perspective, we lose ourselves, and we are left only with the enemy inside as we create enemies outside.

For this understanding I could not be more grateful to Seeds of Peace, even if it took some of the most frustrating and difficult experiences of my life to achieve it.

**Michael (Detroit)**

### TRUE RELATIONSHIPS

We lined up as the Indian and Pakistani delegations arrived, creating a tunnel for all the new campers to run through.

One by one they came out, some in what we would consider everyday wear, others decked out in beautiful saris or long robes. One girl, with a long dark blue dress and a purple streak in her hair, caught my eye. I smiled at her. Later, I would learn that her name was Haiqa and that she would be one of the smartest and sweetest people I have ever met.

We danced alongside these strangers for a while, letting the excitement inside us roll through our bodies as we jumped up and down. I looked around, hoping that I would be able to connect with these people, to go past superficial friendships and make true relationships.

Fast forward three and a half weeks. All of us stood, drenched,

singing the words of the Seeds of Peace song at the end of Color Games. Some of us were wearing blue, others light green, but in that moment, I got the feeling that everyone was on my side.

**Rhea (California)**

### EMBRACING A CLICHÉ

Seeds of Peace is the best thing that ever happened to me. At Camp, I did things I never imagined I ever would.

I slept in a bunk bed under a girl from “the other side.” We have the same name, only in different languages.

I had a dialogue, once a day, with people from all over the Middle East. I was emotionally supported by someone from “the other side.” I cried, more than I ever have before.

I walked blindfolded on a high rope with a guy from “the other side.” We needed to trust each other.

Maybe this all sounds clichéd, but part of being a Seed means being a cliché: being a true friend to someone who is supposed to be an enemy, and believing peace is possible and that we can create change.

This is perhaps the reason why some people have a problem with Seeds of Peace. They don’t believe that any of these amazing things can happen, so they call you a traitor and make fun of you. But it doesn’t matter.

**Or (Jerusalem)**





## MEANINGLESS LABELS

The pro-Israeli pro-Palestinian dichotomy reinforces the belief that there are two sides to a conflict. Generally, what follows after is that “my side is right and good, and your side is wrong and bad.”

I reject a side-based understanding of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (and of all others as well). I don’t ever see a scenario where something that is good for Israelis is bad for Palestinians and vice versa.

If pro-Israeli meant in favor of the interests of Israelis (and the same for pro-Palestinian), I am the most pro-Israeli (and pro-Palestinian) person you’ll ever meet!

What matters are the actual policies that people support and the consequences of those policies. If modern political discourse continues to focus on using small, condensed buzzwords, phrases, and labels, the quality of the discussion, by design, will never be fruitful. People should always strive to speak about the issue at hand and not get bogged down in whether the person to whom they are speaking is supposedly “pro” or “anti.”

The problem now is that the “pro” label is used to describe the support of policies that the government is generally in favor of but that may be harmful to people’s interests.

To take one example of many, I think that Israel staying a Jewish state is harmful to Israelis’ interests, Palestinians’ interests, Jews’ interests, Muslims’ interests, and everyone else’s interests! If Israel were to become a secular democracy and eventually incorporate the occupied Palestinian territories into its borders, this would greatly benefit everyone in the region.

Some might disagree with this policy proposal. Many people would. What they cannot say is that I am anti-Israeli or anti-semitic, or that I don’t care about Israelis; I’m proposing this with careful thought and with the best interests of Israelis in mind.

That highlights why using the “pro-[insert group here]” language makes no sense. Unless people openly admit to favoring one group over another, they should never be labeled as pro one group.

Let’s eliminate all the pro-Israeli and pro-Palestinian talk. You are either trying to find a solution that has the best interests of all parties in mind, or you are favoring one group over

another.

I don’t think the latter can be justified on any grounds. It makes more sense to view the conflict in terms of what will help the people immersed in the conflict, regardless of political views, religious beliefs, or ethnicity.

**Zach (Chappaqua)**

## REFLECTIONS ON DIALOGUE

My excitement about attending Camp was tempered with apprehension. It was intimidating to know I would be conversing with peers from areas directly affected by “the conflict.” Were my peers going to judge me because I was so removed from conflicts very much a part of their everyday lives?

Socially, I immediately felt accepted by everyone; outside of dialogue, my delegation identity did not seem to matter. I felt like I belonged at Seeds of Peace, more than anywhere else I had ever been.

Inside the dialogue hut, I had more difficulty finding my place. Our first dialogue consisted of shouting—and more shouting. I was shocked. I had never seen this much animosity within a group of teenagers. Just as I was removed from the conflict geographically, I also felt removed from the conversation. How was I supposed to contribute when I barely even knew what was going on? How could my opinion matter?

I certainly didn’t expect dialogue to be as easy as the social aspect of Camp, and it wasn’t. Each session was as challenging as the one before it.

Over the next week, I struggled to find my footing. What helped was my dialogue peers’ willingness to explain their points of view.

As I became more informed, I found the confidence to voice my own opinions. I realized that as an American removed from the conflict I brought a different perspective that was valuable to the dynamic of the dialogue—a vantage point that could not be offered either by other Seeds or by our facilitators.

While people were sometimes upset by what I had to say, they listened. They didn’t dismiss my opinions as an outsider. They argued with me as someone informed about the conflict, and that was incredibly gratifying. The topics we discussed and the stories that were told will always stay with me.

**Kate (New York City)**

Your letters are most welcome! Letters may be edited for length, content and style. E-mail your submissions to [olivebranch@seedsofpeace.org](mailto:olivebranch@seedsofpeace.org)

## SHARING PEACE

This summer we had a workshop, Voices of the People, where Pakistani and Afghan Seeds came to Mumbai. They stayed in our homes, met our parents, came to our schools, and entered our daily lives.

My parents and family friends met Zohra, my Afghan friend who stayed with me, and they had so much to ask her. They were curious, intrigued. It was a beautiful process of cultural and emotional exchange. It was an example of how peace can be shared.

**Ira (Mumbai)**

## BE THE CHANGE

I learned so much about leadership this past summer and still there is so much more to learn and discover. Seeds of Peace gives me hope and proves to me once again that even in the hardest times, coexistence is possible.

One of the most inspiring things I heard at Camp is: "Be the change you want to see in the world."

So, Seeds, let's be that change.  
**Avital (Ashqelon)**

## MESSAGE TO NEW SEEDS

Little did I know that when I came through the big green Camp gate, I was entering a place that would change my life and greatly influence who I am today.

I didn't know that I would leave after three weeks with 160 new family members. I didn't know that people who I used to call the enemy would become my friends.

Here, a year and a half later, I still remember every single effect that Camp had on me—whether it was during dialogue, at dinner, through evening activities, or simply while sitting near Pleasant Lake with Seeds of all different nationalities.

My message for the upcoming Seeds is to live in the moment, share your dreams and ambitions, and listen to the people around you.

There is no "other side." We are all human, and we want our voices to be heard. Do not be afraid to show your emotions. Do not think that the person who is sitting right next to you in dialogue wants to hurt you.

Forget about your past for a minute and focus on the future—we are the next generation of leaders, so let's make sure that we are promising and peaceful ones.

**Areej (Jerusalem)**

# In memoriam

## NASEEM ADNAN SHQUEIR

MARCH 12, 1988 — MARCH 27, 2010  
BETHLEHEM

SEEDS OF PEACE MOURNS THE LOSS OF  
NASEEM (BUNK 13, II, 2004), WHO WAS  
KILLED IN A HIKING ACCIDENT.



## GOING TO WAR WITH YOURSELF

Going into dialogue, I didn't quite know what to expect. Being shouted at by the majority of the room all at once was scary for me at first. As a very opinionated camper, I spoke—a lot—and consequently took a lot of the heat and anger in the room.

It wasn't long before I began to dread dialogue, like a big Band-Aid I had to rip off every morning.

Toward the end of Camp, a counselor said something about going to war with ourselves. I had a revelation as ideas suddenly clicked into place: it wasn't having kids yell at me that made dialogue hard—it was the terrifying realization that my opinions were changing. And more than that, it was the fight between my inner left wing and my inner right wing.

I would like to say that the battle is over, but it is not. Dialogue did, however, become much better for me after that. Alongside Rumi's most famous quote about the field ("Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing/and rightdoing there is a field"), I found another one of his quotes to be a great source of guidance throughout Camp:

"God teaches us by means of opposites so that we have two wings to fly, not one."

**Adaya (Modi'in)**



# seeds in the lead



## Mona (Cairo)

MONA (1996) WROTE OR contributed to dozens of stories, many front page, in *The New York Times* about the protest movements in Egypt and Tunisia.

Mona appeared on *Charlie Rose* and authored a *New York Times*

*Week in Review* piece, "The Legacy of 18 Days in Tahrir Square."

"I still don't think I have fully grasped what happened or what the immense power of that moment represented," Mona says of the events in Tahrir.

She is currently studying documentary filmmaking in New York City.

## Cobi (New York)

COBI (2006) CO-FOUNDED Dorm Room Diplomacy, a program that uses Skype to cultivate mutual understanding between young people in the Middle East and United States.

Dorm Room Diplomacy connects UPenn students with college students in the Middle East during two-hour facilitated dialogue sessions.

The program won praise from President Bill Clinton, who honored Cobi's project at the 2011 Clinton Global Initiative University.



## Bashar (Tira)

BASHAR (1999) FOUNDED A community development organization in his hometown. Darna (meaning "our home" in Arabic) empowers youth in Tira to take responsibility for their futures.

"I feel a sense of responsibility to bring change to my community," says Bashar. "And I am using tools I gained through Seeds of Peace to do this."

PHOTO CREDITS:  
MONA EL NAGGAR,  
CLINTON GLOBAL INITIATIVE,  
ALIA LAHLOU,  
MOSTAFA FAHMY

## Faheem (Lahore)

FAHEEM (2006) HAS HELPED lead projects, including the Seeds of Peace Interfaith and National Integration Camps, that bring together Pakistani youth from diverse religious, ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds with the goal of promoting understanding and tolerance.

He helped organize the annual

Seeds of Peace Inter-School Drama Competition and Mock Parliament programs and serves on both the Seeds Leadership Committee in Pakistan and the new camper selection committee.

Faheem also initiated a program in Lahore in conjunction with his school, the University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences, to shelter, feed and vaccinate sick and neglected dogs.

He serves as a class representative and helps edit his school magazine.



## Shapoor (Kabul)

SHAPOOR (2009) LAUNCHED A project designed to provide Afghan students with better access to the Internet. Such access is rare in Afghanistan, and its general absence from learning environments leaves a void in students' ability to access information about other countries and cultures. Many schools in Kabul lack both computers and pertinent curricula.

"The students in our schools are limited to what they read in textbooks," says Shapoor.

He aims to combat the knowledge deficit by providing over 300 Kabul public school students with workshops over the course of the next six months during which they will learn



how to use the Internet as an educational resource—as a way "to learn, research and communicate."

In addition to increasing technological awareness and facility among Kabul youth, the Internet Training Course will also provide substantial leadership opportunities; while the

first workshop will be conducted by a professional, subsequent workshops will turn one session's students into the next session's teachers.

Shapoor purchased three computers and accompanying equipment for the Internet Training Project with funding that he was awarded by Seeds of Peace as part of a competition in which he had to demonstrate the potential impact and fiscal responsibility of his plan in a written application as well to a panel.

Afghan officials are currently considering ways in which new technology can be incorporated into the national curriculum, and an Afghan education official says Shapoor's project lays important groundwork.

Says Shapoor, "I hope one day all schools in Afghanistan will have this subject as part of their educational curriculum."

## Mostafa (Cairo)

MOSTAFA (1999) AND HIS FRIENDS filmed, edited and recorded a music video over a two-day period during the Egyptian Revolution.

The song, called *Sout Al Horeya* (The Voice of Freedom), has received over 2 million views on YouTube since it was released on the day before President Mubarak's resignation.

Mostafa filmed during the protests in Tahrir Square, and despite losing two video cameras to police, he never gave up.

"Our only goal was to create a video that might increase the hope for our people," he says.

"As you see, it has been spread.

We were inspired by what we saw every day in Egypt. We smelled freedom and we couldn't resist doing something."

Mostafa's cousin survived being shot in the chest by police during a peaceful protest, an incident Mostafa witnessed and that motivated him even more.

"I used passion and all my abilities to peacefully defend what I believe in," he says.

"We made the song with love and pride. We wanted to make our voices loud—really loud—for all the world to hear."

The video has aired on major Egyptian TV stations, as well as on the BBC, CNN, Al Jazeera, and Democracy Now!, and was linked to in *Wired* and Thomas Friedman's February 15 *New York Times* column.

In a *60 Minutes* interview on CBS, Google executive and



prominent protest activist Wael Ghonim introduced the video to correspondent Harry Smith and agreed with Smith that *Sout Al Horeya* "is the best song to come out of the revolution."

 nominate a Seed in the Lead  
[olivebranch@seedsofpeace.org](mailto:olivebranch@seedsofpeace.org)

# camp journal

BY HABEEBA (Cairo)

**TUESDAY, JUNE 28TH** So this is really happening! I'm sitting in *my* bunk, on *my* bunk bed, wearing *my* beautiful Seeds shirt. It's rest hour. Right in front of me, two of my bunkmates are sitting on a

bed having a hushed conversation. One is Palestinian and the other is an Arab-Israeli. They're speaking in Arabic and discussing the conflict. The Arab-Israeli is crying as she describes the dilemma she's facing. She says she doesn't want to pick a side. The Palestinian is calming her down, saying that it is too early to worry about dialogue. Now they're hugging, and I can't help but smile.

**WEDNESDAY, JUNE 29TH** Just came back from dialogue. My actual first serious dialogue. And I'm in tears. After dialogue, a Palestinian girl and I were talking. She says she feels like a traitor. She says she feels like she's betraying her country by being here. She doesn't like having to interact with Israelis all day, in the bunk and at meals and during activities. I asked her why she came here if she feels this way. She said that she didn't imagine it would be this hard. I never did either. I feel so thankful for the girls in my bunk right now.

**MONDAY, JULY 11TH** We were on the high ropes today during group challenge, and I was paired up with an Israeli. We had to go back and forth on the high ropes twice. The group challenge counselor asked us to do it while one of us had our eyes closed. My partner closed his eyes immediately, held my hand, and simply said "I trust you."

I was shocked to my core. An Israeli was telling me that he trusts me. Who would have thought?

PHOTO CREDITS: MADELEINE PRYOR, BOBBIE GOTTSCHALK



Habeeba



**Group Challenge:  
High Ropes**

B

If someone had told me three months ago that I would talk to an Israeli every day, I would have laughed. It would have sounded so stupid and so unlikely. But here I was. And it was actually nice. It wasn't horrifying and it didn't make me feel like I was betraying my country or my family or the beliefs of my society. I realized that sometime in the past two weeks I had stopped judging people at Camp by their nationality and started judging them individually, as people.

**THURSDAY, JULY 14<sup>TH</sup>** Dialogue was so intense today. And shocking too. We talked about the Israeli army, Nazis, Palestine and settlements. One of the Israelis started crying and left the room. My high ropes partner teared up as well. But at the end, it felt like we had finally reached a point of understanding.

**MONDAY, AUGUST 22<sup>ND</sup>** It's been a month since we left Camp, and I still can't find words to describe the last day. No words could ever convey all the feelings. I am so grateful to have met these people, to have shared these three weeks of my life with them (hardly enough), yet so sad as well.



**Color Games**

The tears. The hugs. The goodbyes. It was like watching your siblings move away, only knowing that you might never see them again. Of the 191 campers this summer, I had to watch 180 of them walk away.

My favorite Camp moment? That's easy: after Color Games. The moment we all stepped into that lake, as one family, as Seeds. That moment reminds me that no matter where life takes us, there will always be people beside me, even if they are on the "other side" of our conflict.



**Goodbyes**

B

# FACE TO FACE

Before Seeds arrive at the Seeds of Peace International Camp in Maine, many of them wonder, "What does a Pakistani look like? What does an Indian sound like? What does a Pakistani think?" Not knowing answers to little questions like these allows stereotypes to form based on what we hear from politicians and the media. The goal of my *Aamney-Samney* ("Face-to-Face" in Hindi and Urdu) project is to change this—to get as many people as possible from both sides of the India-Pakistan border to have reality-based answers to such questions. I want them to have a face, an actual person projected in their minds, when they read, speak, or hear about the "other side."

GRAPHIC CREDIT: EMMA FOLLENDER

**T**HE VISION FOR AAMNEY-SAMNEY IS to connect students from Pakistan and India across the border using the latest technology available to them: Skype, blogs, and phones.

The Bombay International School and Lahore Grammar School formed a partnership in which four students from each school, led by Seeds and a teacher, met regularly over the course of several Skype sessions to share both commonalities and differences between the two nations' cultures.



**Jehan**  
(Mumbai)

The first step in the cross-border communication involved setting up a private blog that would allow the two groups of students to tell each other about themselves, their beliefs, and their life goals.

Their similarities quickly surfaced, and the students were able to use these to build friendships and even, eventually, to celebrate their differences. Some bonded over food, some over photography, some over motor racing accidents and some over the *Twilight* novel and film series.

ers through a video Skype call held at their respective schools. Over 50 guests were in attendance to hear their presentations.

The first group introduced their topic—what people generally think of “the other side”—before presenting a video in which they had interviewed family and friends about misconceptions of “the other.”

The second group presented on the topic of language and screened a video they had created that challenged others to decipher the differences between Hindi and Urdu.

In one part of the video, the group leaders told a joke in Hindi/Urdu and asked the interviewees which language they believed the joke to be in. As expected, everyone in Pakistan said Urdu and everyone in India said Hindi, demonstrating how similar our spoken languages are; if an Indian speaks in Hindi, a Pakistani who speaks Urdu would understand, and vice versa.

The third group created a slideshow about the cuisines of the two cultures. They ended their presentation by sharing a popular dish from the other country with the guests in attendance. Those in India enjoyed homemade *biryani*, while those in Pakistan enjoyed *vada-pav*.

The fourth group covered the topic of clothing by



It was as if the first days of Camp were unfolding before us on our computer screens!

From there, the students began connecting over Skype. They first held an ice-breaker session that allowed them to learn more about their peers from beyond the border.

Follow-up Skype sessions were more task-oriented as we formed four cross-border teams, each consisting of one Indian and one Pakistani student. Based on the theory that “the differences between India and Pakistan are blown out of proportion,” each group compared and contrasted a specific aspect of each culture. The topics included food, language, clothing, and beliefs.

After a month of conducting research and sharing information, the students presented their findings to oth-

presenting a series of images and interviews with a diverse group of people from different ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds.

If we can form a strong bond just by realizing similarities and valuing differences through a small project, then why can't our leaders do the same?

This project instilled in all a sense of peace and mutual respect for each other. Having a friend from across the border is not very common, but when one is made, thoughts, hobbies, ideas, and dreams can converge at a point where everything goes beyond our conflict, our nationality, who we are, and what we are made to believe.

After all, the “enemy” does have a face.

**KABUL**

**LAHORE**

**MUMBAI**

# VOICES OF THE PEOPLE

South Asia Seeds came together for a week-long conference in Mumbai, India, to generate awareness and understanding of varying perspectives and views on core divisive issues.

The resulting Voices of the People project creates opportunities for Indians, Pakistanis and Afghans to encounter each other in positive humanizing ways, build trust and understanding of each other's perspectives, and address shared issues of concern.

## COMING TOGETHER WITH CRICKET

By Faraz (Lahore), Zeenia (Mumbai) and Zohra (Kabul)

**C**ricket-lovers all over the world still remember the fateful day of January 1999. The M.A. Chidambaram stadium in Chennai was packed with emotions, anticipation and hope. Sachin Tendulkar, the greatest batsman ever to be born, was going all guns blazing and India looked set for a win.

But the Indian juggernaut was halted by the resourceful and effective bowling of Wasim and Waqar. Pakistan snatched victory from the jaws of defeat. Usually a deafening silence would have ensued. But not that day. The entire crowd at Chennai rose to their feet and applauded both teams for an epic cricket match.

In a similar incident in Lahore, Pakistani fans cheered an Indian win. These two incidents strongly highlight the fact that cricket has the power to turn foes into friends. The essence, belief and soul of the game lie in bringing people together, in encouraging harmony, coexistence and brotherhood.

Interestingly, before the birth of cricket in Afghanistan, the public was divided in two—one which supported India and the other Pakistan. But when cricket took root in Afghanistan, it united people who could now take pride in supporting their own country.

Sadly, this idea of unification is manipulated by the media to protect its own selfish interests. The headlines of "Biggest Battle Ever" and "Do or Die" before the Indo-Pak World Cup semi-final clash are still fresh in our minds. But people of both countries have realised this, and so, instead of increasing enmity, they are lending a helping hand. Indian fans showed

heart-warming hospitality and friendship to their Pakistani counterparts who had come to see the World Cup semi-final.

Mohan, aged 73, a paanwala on the streets of Mumbai, said that civilians from both sides wanted peace and that the media and politicians created an unnecessary divide.

India and Pakistan share a common history, which has aroused in them a common passion, interest and love for the game. Close proximity with these two countries led to the birth of cricket in Afghanistan. The pace of development of cricket in these three countries is pretty amazing, with India winning the World Cup, Pakistan making it to the semi-finals and Afghanistan clinching the gold medal in the Asian games. The only hurdle in our way now is to reduce the commercialisation of cricket and enjoy it in its true spirit.

Children, teenagers, adults and even octogenarians who gather in parks, on streets, on beaches and on rooftops to play cricket do not gain fame or money. They gain what we call inner joy—the joy of playing with people you know; the joy of playing as a team; the joy of losing to your own. And once we find this joy—lost somewhere in the sands of time—it will emanate to the entire world.

## MADE IN HEAVEN?

By Gaurav (Mumbai) and Sahar (Kabul)

**R**ichard Gere, in *Shall We Dance?*, shyly admits that we marry because "We need a witness to our lives". How do we find this "witness"? The reason that marriage is so different from any other relationship is that it enters every little compartment of our lives. It becomes so much a part of our identity that it



# ... HERE'S MY STORY

might even change the most essential part of it: our name.

With changing notions of choice all over the world, marriage as an institution has been challenged in its cultural setting. Arranged marriages, so opposed to the notion of choice, often play spoiler in the lives of young people. It's a peculiar phenomenon that strings together our three countries: India, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Each generation grows up with its own ideas and heroes. And with the quick spread of images from all over the world, youth are growing up with faraway heroes and ideas. The conflict, whether subtle or loud, finds its way to all the drawing rooms of South Asia.

In a place so bombarded with ideas of culture, religion, homogeneity, exclusivity and romanticism, marriage becomes a decision that represents several choices outside of it. Is culture overbearing? Should we forget preaching and tampering with the natural way of love? Or is it essential to preserve facets of exclusivity? The grief of so many young South Asians forces us to question the meanings of "honor" and "love."

## BONDING OVER BIRYANI

By Aishwariya & Rayan (Mumbai) and Hamidullah (Kabul)

**M**y cousin Avani had just finished her MBA and started her job in the human resources department of a reputable company. During this period, my grandmother's friend came over to live with us for a few days. She liked Avani's cooking very much, and before leaving, held Avani's hand in hers and said with a mischievous twinkle, "Oh you are a very smart girl, you cook so well. You know how to win the heart of your husband. After all, the way to a man's heart is through his stomach!"

I had completely forgotten this incident until recently, when I read an article on the cultural origins of Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. It emphasized the common culture of these countries. It mentioned that the cuisines of Northern India, Afghanistan and Pakistan were very similar. So when my friends from Pakistan and Afghanistan visited me, we decided to experiment with the cuisines of our respective countries.

Our friend from Kabul explained that Afghan food is very similar to some of our Indian food, though blander. My Kashmiri friend begged to differ, saying that he actually found

Afghan cuisine to be similar only to Kashmiri cuisine, since both were very creamy and used plenty of nuts and raisins.

We could not find any delicacies specifically attributed to Pakistan outside of the standard Peshwari *chole* and Lahori *dal*. But we managed to find many delicacies common to the two countries. On tasting the various items on the menu, our friends from Lahore found the food to be much like theirs, though oilier and spicier. The same story followed everywhere.

I narrated our food adventures to a friend's father. He said, "There can perhaps be an Afghan food festival in India ... But will you find a Pakistani food festival? I bet not! For all practical purposes, there is almost no difference between the two countries. I only wish that people would realize how similar our cultures, traditions and ways of life are and how stupid this fight is!"

I found this sentiment very interesting. And while thinking about it further, my grandmother's friend's words kept ringing in my ears ... if the way to a man's heart is through his stomach, I am sure our shared cuisine could be the way to the heart of a whole region.

## THE FLIP SIDE OF RELIGIONS

By Mukhlis (Kabul), Ronita (Mumbai) and Sana (Lahore)

**M**ost people have stereotypes about other religions. These are like people who live in a neighborhood but don't know what exactly is happening in their neighbor's house. These stereotypes can be good or bad. Our mission was to find such stereotypes, remove the negatives and increase the positives, let people know what other religions think of theirs, and pass the word around.

We met religious people in churches, mosques, temples and gurdwaras. For our interviews we got to talk to priests, pujaris, maulvis and other religious leaders. We also interviewed some common people about what they thought. We met people who were shy and maybe fearful of our cameras and video recorders; they didn't talk to us.

Even so, some people were so keen to talk, as if they were thirsty and searching for water, like a moth wanting to get near the candle. So we interviewed them.

One of the interviewees was Omer Atterwala. He owned a perfume shop. When we asked him about religion he told



## Voices of the People (continued)

us that Allah is one and that this world shows his powers and shows there is a God. Everything has a creator, so this whole world and humans also have a creator, he said. Days and nights and the fact that the sky stands without support are signs of God's existence. Everyone prays to one God, but in different ways. Everyone believes in God. All religions should be respected. Most people believe that Jihad is war. But it is not that. The real meaning of Jihad is a person who works hard and tries to feed himself and his family. He works a lot. This is Jihad. Jihad does not involve killing anyone.

We interviewed many people and they gave us so much information. We realized how similar their ideas were.

There is a saying: One represents all. We interviewed one, but each represented the perspective of a whole religion.

The religious leaders we interviewed all said almost exactly the same thing and made the same points. It was as if they were a family. They had similar goals but different ideas on how to achieve them. For example, if people pray in mosques, churches or temples, you can imagine that they reach the same place but from different roads. Everyone was thinking of peace, unity and being one; of respecting each other's religions and letting each other do their jobs. They preach, "to each his own."

There is a saying: "Laugh and the whole world laughs with you, but cry and you cry alone!" It seemed like the people we interviewed were just waiting for this moment. They were waiting for someone to come talk to them, to speak about their religion and customs.

### JANTAR MANTAR

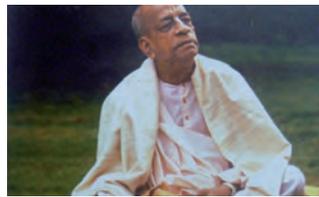
By Jay (Mumbai), Laleh (Kabul) and Rafay (Lahore)

**C**orruption is deeply rooted in a society like India, where every institution of the state suffers from it in one way or another. In 2010, India was exposed to massive scams like the Commonwealth Games scandal, the 2G scam and the Karnataka land scam. These were the proverbial straws that broke the camel's back.

India always had the option of choosing a way to fight corruption. It was like choosing between the right way and the wrong way to do the correct thing, and so many chose Anna Hazare's way (whatever that might prove to be). Hazare has turned into the Indian spearhead against corruption. He fasted for three days at Jantar Mantar in Delhi for the passing of the LokPal Bill.

Innumerable people have roamed the roads with "Hazare" written on their faces, showing their support for public accountability.

Some pronounced Hazare a threat to democracy, claiming



that he was coercing a democratically elected government. Others claimed that Hazare has been leading the movement against corruption without substantial thought, making the Indian anti-corruption machinery susceptible to failure due to the lack of substantial checks and balances.

But the general sentiment in India is that Anna Hazare is doing the right thing, regardless of the path that he chose, and so therefore he must be supported. India seems to be willing to take the risk to see off corruption for good.

### LOOKING BACK, LOOKING FORWARD

By Ali (Lahore), Alefyah (Mumbai) and Mortaza (Kabul)

**T**he Revolt of 1857. The rise of nationalism. The Swaraj Party. The Quit India movement and then, finally, the Indian Independence Act. These are just a few examples of the struggles against our colonial past. In reality, we can't even begin to explore the desperation our ancestors felt, their frustration.

Apathy is a strong word that, when used incorrectly, can also be deemed an accusation. How many people in the city are contributing to the apathy that is plaguing our lives and rapidly spreading like a viral disease?

The question of whether or not we appreciate our past—both our culture and our heritage—is a difficult question to answer. We asked this question of some people walking out of the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya (formerly the Prince of Wales Museum). They spoke of how we could hold ourselves up even before the British came and invaded our country, drained our resources and left behind several symbols of British authority, including the museum itself.

British rule wasn't entirely negative, of course. That period did a lot for the advancement of the country in terms of communication and transport, and we even succeeded in overcoming several social evils, but only in certain places.

But we observe that the heritage that existed previous to British rule began to disintegrate, and that this slow disintegration continues today. People unconsciously value their own ideals lower than the Western ideals that our forefathers fought so hard to get rid of.

Today, as we look out onto the streets of Mumbai, we find most people adorned in Western clothes and listening to English songs.

There have always been questions in my mind, playing like background music. Why do we choose to speak English





instead of Hindi? Why is it considered “embarrassing” to speak Hindi? Why do we jump at the chance to visit Paris but not Chandigarh? Why do some Indians look down on this country—perhaps through branded sunglasses—while foreigners are awestruck at its beauty? All these questions still remain unanswered.

### BOMBAY IS A POEM

By Jawed (Kabul), Ira (Mumbai) and Moez (Lahore)

**B**ombay is a poem  
 A poem with no rhyme  
 Bombay is a painting  
 A painting with no lines  
 Bombay is bhel-puri  
 A delicious mixture  
 Bombay is like the ocean  
 Far too vast to capture  
 Here, religions merge  
 Into one blinding haze  
 Identities are hidden beneath  
 The city’s frantic craze  
 The Muslims are at Mahalaxmi  
 The Hindus, Haji Ali  
 Sikhs and Jains and Buddhists  
 In every little gali  
 At a Buddhist temple  
 A man with big brown eyes  
 Showed us the white Buddha,  
 and said,  
 “This is where the truth lies”  
 The hair on my arm rose  
 I was mesmerised  
 By this temple, by this faith  
 By what I saw inside  
 After a minute of absolute  
 silence  
 We set out again, to Haji Ali  
 With one recorder, a camera  
 and a pen  
 At this dargah we found stories  
 Of religion and Bombay  
 Hearing these I was jolted  
 I had nothing left to say  
 Markandeshwar temple

Had a priest with grey hair  
 He had on a thin white dhoti,  
 Which looked like it just  
 might tear  
 The temple was serene  
 With the sea on all four sides  
 In this city by the sea,  
 Religions are free and don’t  
 need to hide  
 Amar, Akbar, Anthony  
 Chowk  
 With honking buses and cars  
 At night the Christian cross  
 illuminates the soul,  
 Even brighter than the stars  
 Interviewing people in  
 Bombay  
 We saw religion through  
 their eyes  
 And somewhere I think  
 We got answers to a million  
 hows and whys  
 We went on a quest  
 And, we know now,  
 That everyone in Bombay  
 Comes together somehow  
 Somewhere in all this  
 madness  
 There is a story the city tells  
 When Mumbaikars are at  
 peace with each other  
 They will find peace within  
 themselves

### DISPARITY IN EDUCATION: BRIDGING BRAINS By Shapoor (Kabul), Jehan (Mumbai) and Noorzadeh (Lahore)

**B**ombay has a literacy rate of 85.6 percent, according to official figures. However, behind these numbers is a different story, with the levels of education being provided in municipal schools differing greatly from those in elite private schools.

This disparity can be seen in terms of the municipal schools’ lack of proper facilities, low levels of education, fixed syllabi and poorly trained teachers who are often paid too little to be committed to their jobs. Thus, when these two distinct types of establishments are compared, it is evident that there is a great discrepancy between the standards of education being provided to the underprivileged and those of what is being given to the wealthy. This has several repercussions for society as a whole; it creates a divergence among the “literate” and enhances social divisions.

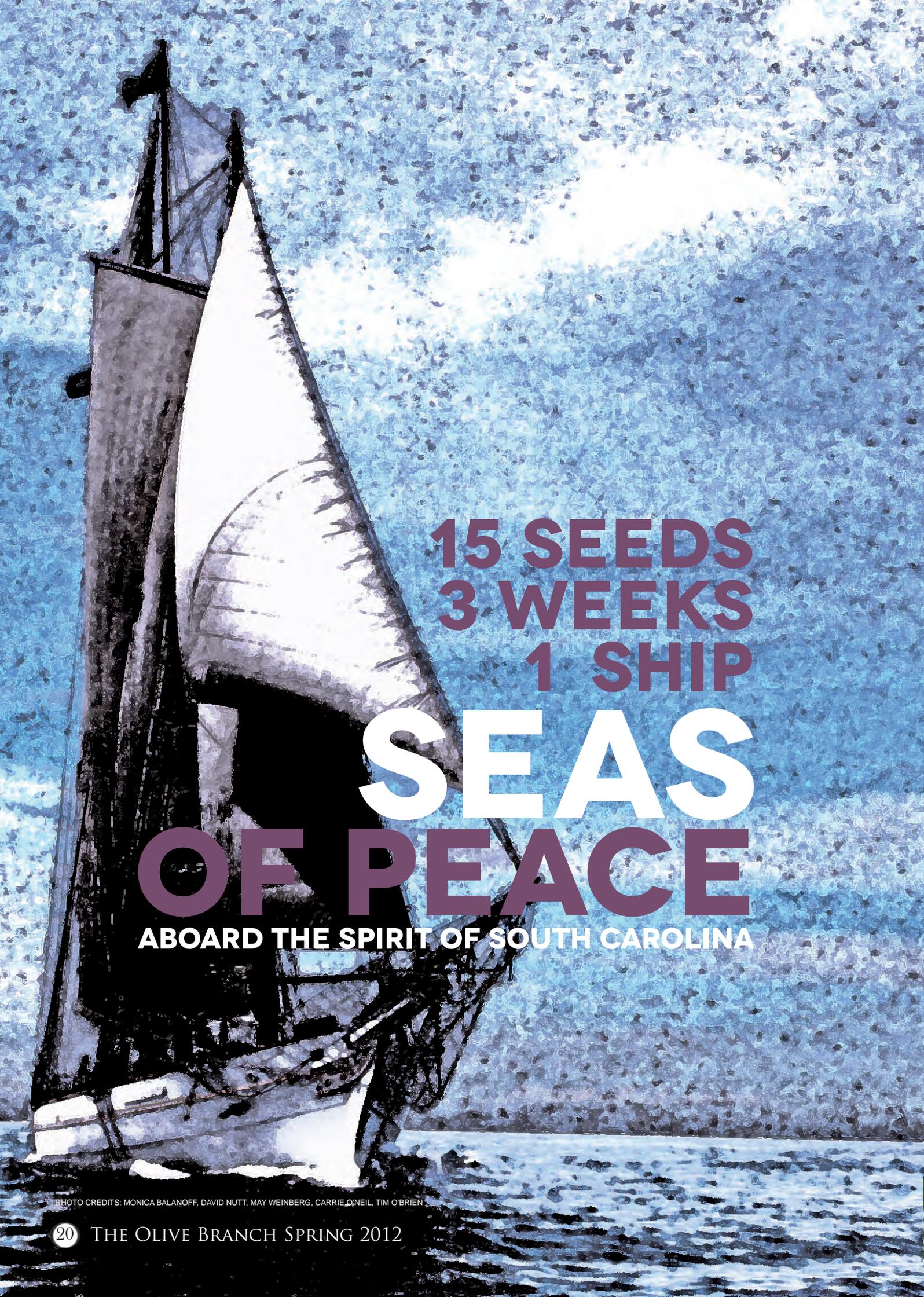
However, there is still hope that this gap can be bridged. To this end, non-profit, non-governmental organizations such as The Sujaya Foundation are doing valuable work.

With centres spread throughout Bombay, Sujaya works with children who attend municipal schools to build upon what they learn there and form a sound academic base. At the institute in Dadar, we were greeted with smiles and a friendly atmosphere conducive to learning. Volunteers and trained teachers who are talented and dedicated educate the children in subjects like English, science, mathematics and computer science, and by using fresh and unique teaching methods, like the use of word games, that are friendly, interactive, and innovative.

Children are motivated to learn and to enjoy learning. The aim is to create equal opportunities for underprivileged children and to equip them for the future with the skills and qualities they will need in order to gain employment opportunities so that they can compete on an equal footing with their private school peers and contribute to society. There are also extracurricular activities like drama to help the children develop into well-rounded individuals. The people who run Sujaya realise the significance of learning and strive to instill a love for it in the young minds they are preparing for the future.

The Sujaya Foundation is an important initiative that is helping to change the lives of many of those who might otherwise be deprived of a good education. The need to bridge the gap and bring about some uniformity in the level of education received by distinct social classes remains strong.





**15 SEEDS  
3 WEEKS  
1 SHIP**

**SEAS  
OF PEACE**

**ABOARD THE SPIRIT OF SOUTH CAROLINA**

PHOTO CREDITS: MONICA BALANOFF, DAVID NUTT, MAY WEINBERG, CARRIE O'NEIL, TIM O'BRIEN



**S**EEDS OF PEACE INSTILLS A COMMONALITY AMONG ENEMIES. SEAS OF PEACE SEEKS TO ACCOMPLISH THIS SAME GOAL: TO IMPRESS IN YOUNG LEADERS HOW RELATABLE THEIR ENEMY CAN BE.



**Grant**  
(Washington, DC)

Seas of Peace bears a surprising number of similarities to Camp. Its greatest asset is the shared experience among its participants. The cabin living aspect of Camp translates into the small bunks lining the bulkheads of the schooner. And just like Camp has Color Games and the culmination in the lake, Seas has a journey out beyond land culminating in the group's efforts to dock at home again.

But the differences between Seas and Camp are notable. At Camp, you are one among 160 Seeds; at Seas, you are one of 15. There are no separate groups for activities, bunks or dining. There is simply one bound, shared, complete crew.

The relationships I formed with my fellow sailing Seeds are much tighter than those formed at Camp. This is not to diminish the Camp experience; Seas of Peace is dependent on Camp to introduce us to the cause. But programs like Seas of Peace build on foundations laid at Camp. They motivate us in new ways.

At the end, I realized the important difference between a completed voyage and a successful one. It was the difference between *Spirit of South Carolina* carrying 15 kids into Boston, and *Spirit* being sailed by 15 Seeds into Boston. And for anyone who has not sailed on a schooner, it is no easy task. It requires unwavering trust in others, the ability to lead when required to do so, and the maturity to follow. This is what was displayed by a group of kids who just three weeks prior weren't able to complete Whale Watch, one of the most basic group exercises.

**M**ANY EVENTS TOUCHED ME DURING MY JOURNEY WITH SEAS OF PEACE. I FELT EMPOWERED WHEN I WAS ABLE TO CONNECT THINGS TOGETHER DURING DIALOGUE, TO THINK CLEARLY, TO SET MY MIND FREE FROM PRECONCEIVED JUDGMENTS.

At the same time, I was still able to stand by and build upon my deep beliefs and principles.

Many times, having to wait my turn to say something



**Ahmad**  
(Tulkarem)

in dialogue gave me enough time to think about what I was going to say and how it would affect the people around me. This taught me respect and patience and made me think in a more mature manner.

I also felt empowered when I began to face my fears and do things I never would have imagined trying, like jumping off a ship in the middle of the ocean. The quick and intense learning process was

challenging mentally and physically, but it made me realize that I can do anything I want to, if I'm willing to work hard for it.

Although my past Seeds of Peace experiences gave me the foundation of trust that I needed for me to be willing to participate in Seas of Peace, the two experiences were very different.

Camp was a time when all of us had to face some hard facts; we discussed them and even sometimes argued furiously about them. But we never really discussed what to do in order to change things that weren't right. All I wanted to do was make my point and feel like I presented it better than the other side. Basically, I just wanted to win the argument.

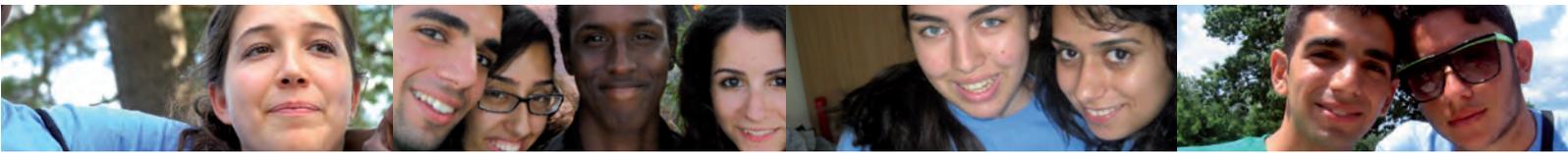
At Seas of Peace, we had to think as human beings who were responsible for one another. It wasn't our ability to win an argument or be ambassadors for our country's political position that was important. What was important were our personalities, self-reliance, leadership and teamwork skills. All were tested on a daily basis.

We learned the "triple S" rule: Ship, Shipmate, Self. We had to rely on one another for our safety, food, and eventually getting to our destination. On a ship it can't be all about you!

Even though most of the time we were confined to a ship, we were able to accomplish the most important goal of all: understanding one another. At Camp, even though we were all secluded in the middle of a forest, you could still find a place to retreat to if things got tough. But on a ship you can't run away from difficult situations, ignore them, or throw a man overboard when you don't agree with him. You can't start a fire (figuratively) in dialogue and then escape or forget you lit it.

The most important lesson I learned about leadership began with this saying: "The wind doesn't always blow where ships wish to go." At Seeds of Peace, I felt we were always running against the wind, and we didn't always end up where we wanted to be. But at Seas of Peace, we learned how to take control of the sails and use the wind to reach our destination, a port where we would all be safe.





**WE LIVE IN AN ERA OF ANSWERS. TOO MANY PEOPLE ARE CONVINCED THEY ARE THE ONLY ONES WHO HAVE BEEN PROVIDED WITH THE ABSOLUTE RIGHT ANSWERS.**



**May**  
(Ramat Hashron)

Seeds of Peace introduced me to a different way. It showed me that there are no absolute right answers and taught me how to listen, acknowledge and change.

The difference between dialogue sessions at Seas and dialogue at Camp is the fact that we did not focus exclusively on the conflict aboard *Spirit of South Carolina*.

Instead, we learned about subjects like leadership, acknowledgment

and personal growth, and then related them to our lives back home and to the conflict, making our sessions relevant, effective and enriching.

Being on a schooner in the middle of the ocean for weeks with the same people creates an unbreakable bond. Unlike Camp, you are with the same 15 Seeds all the time—your bunk, table, dialogue and special activity groups are comprised of all the same people. This gives you the opportunity to get to know every single participant on a very personal level. You reach a level of intimacy and friendship that makes the dialogue much deeper and more meaningful.

Three months after the program ended, I joined the

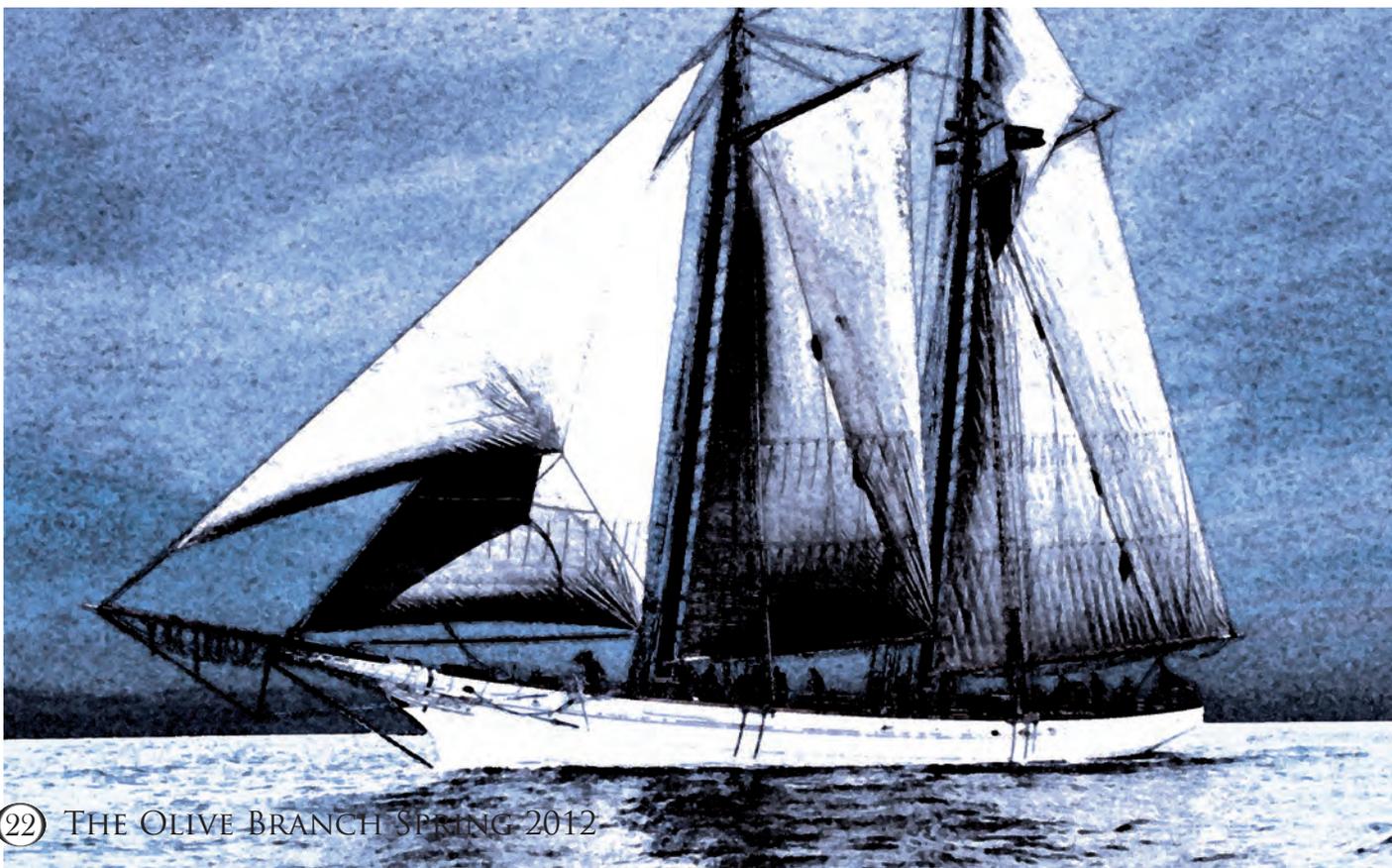
army. The conflict of being a Seed of Peace and a soldier is something that I think about a lot, and Seas of Peace gave me the opportunity to discuss my fears and share my thoughts in a more relevant manner than when I was at Camp.

The program has given me so much and without a doubt was the best, most unique experience of my life, with my summer at Seeds a close second. The different environment of living on the ocean, sailing, and the things I learned about myself have helped me to grow personally and as a Seed. The experience taught me about our ability to react, change and adapt to new challenges and new environments.

Seas of Peace is like an ongoing Group Challenge—in order to succeed in living aboard the schooner, you have to work together with each other and with the ocean. If you are not cooperating with the others, not helping or not trusting in your fellow sailors, someone could get seriously injured. Facing the ocean's power is humbling.

When you see so many bad things around you—death, war, injustice and indifference—keeping hold of the idea of peace, and continuing to believe in it, is difficult. You can lose hope very easily, but at the same time, being part of the Seeds of Peace family, and being able to take part in initiatives like Seas of Peace, gives you hope. Seeing this community grow every summer is what inspires me to do as much as I can for what I believe in.

We are making a change in the world, and it is never easy, but I could not wish for a better way, place and partners to do it with.



# FIRST PERSON

## REFLECTIONS ON ANGER AND FORGIVENESS

**I**N FEBRUARY OF LAST YEAR, I COVERED A PROTEST in Hebron against the closure of a local street to Palestinian traffic by the Israeli army. I am a journalist for *Al Jazeera Talk*, having been inspired to become a reporter by Mazen Dana, the Reuters cameraman who was from my hometown.

When the peaceful demonstration turned violent, I tried to avoid being hit by the Palestinian protesters' rocks—since I was filming very close to the Israeli soldiers—or being tear-gassed by the police.



**Mahmoud**  
(Hebron)

All of a sudden, I was seized by a group of Israeli paramilitary Border Police. I have frequently seen journalists harassed, but I never expected to be assaulted while on press duty.

My frequent appeals of "I am a journalist!" fell on deaf ears. Not understanding why I was being detained, I continued to protest during the jeep ride to the police station.

Every time I said something, a policeman punched me. I continued to shout despite the pain, until they put my face on my knees and a policeman sat on my back.

During the police interrogation, the investigators said that I had been seen and filmed throwing stones during the protest. I asked to see the video; they laughed.

Following the questioning, I was transferred to an Israeli military prison. I was handcuffed for more than five hours; the blood on my head remained from when I was punched during my ride to the police station.

Days passed in jail, and in order to confront the wave of hate storming inside me, I remembered the times I spent at Seeds of Peace. I reflected on the discussions I shared in with my Israeli bunkmates; we would discuss solutions to our conflict, accomplishing far more in our time together than our leaders ever have.

In prison, I was not as afraid of what would happen next as I was of losing control of myself and letting anger take me into the unknown.

During the six days of my detention, I realized that moderates are often attacked, even by their own side. However, I reminded myself that my commitment to Seeds of Peace values of peace and justice do not stem from pragmatism, but rather from who I am.

I prayed for justice to prevail when I finally had my day in court, and the Israeli military judge released me with no charges, and under no conditions.

I was later asked by the Israeli police if I wanted to file a complaint against the people who assaulted me.

I declined. I asked that it be conveyed to them that I forgive them, knowing that everyone will have a chance to change their hearts and souls and correct any harm done to others.



# POEMS

## I SPEAK FROM

I thought they existed  
just to massacre and burn  
Defending my identity was my biggest concern  
I am here to understand  
I am here to understand  
perspectives and learn  
Respect and love are what I seek to earn  
I speak from Amman

Challenging myself as I to listen to the words  
I never thought I would hear  
Feeling the tongues of people  
become sharp knives  
Trying to find the courage to expose my heart,  
To touch the danger zone and be vulnerable  
Understand that I represent only myself before  
the enemies that have become  
my friends with time.  
Honest with myself, I suddenly begin  
to wonder and question and doubt.  
I see that my own reality is just mine  
and every one has his own.  
Hand in hand we are entering into a place  
of pure understanding.  
I speak from Meccabim-Reut

I enter, sit on the chair  
Brothers beside me, "the other side"  
I am excited; want to talk, shout,  
to express myself  
I look them in the eyes sharply  
Here we go: I shoot the first word,  
A word from us, a word from them  
Getting really intense, increasing every second  
I see the fear in their eyes except for one,  
who keeps discussing, saying things  
I could not accept!  
I am discovering their reality;  
I am entering their minds  
I realize what they are!  
What they are based on! How they think!  
Thank you dialogue for this amazing  
knowledge! For this intense experience!  
I speak from Ramallah

Scared, yes. Paranoid, of course.  
Excited, why not?  
Here I am; I take a seat and BAM  
It all starts, the sorrow and grief,  
Words are missiles, even when they are brief.  
Opinions are shared,  
Not always respected, but always heard.  
Cries, screams, anger, and tears  
But my heart is certain we'll stay family  
for years.  
As I leave my last dialogue,  
I know, the windows and rooms  
That I am passing through,  
They are just a start,  
On the way to where I am going.  
I speak from Cairo

A place where I reach  
aboard a plane that crossed oceans,  
Where my heart is open wide  
even to those I opposed,  
Between four walls we are  
throwing roses and thorns,  
Some roses smell better, some thorns feel  
sharper  
The rage inside these walls melts in the moon  
that shines on the beautiful lake every night,  
so the next day you come to this hut  
with love and pride.  
I speak from Taibeh

The echoes of bombs and guns  
Fiery residue of smoke piercing  
through the pores of my skin  
This is the life my brothers  
and sisters come from  
Through their descriptions,  
bringing me to a place  
I have never been  
I stare at war straight in the face,  
exposed to sin.  
Creating links between my fellow campers.  
Every day we leave those heated  
rooms of discussion,  
Returning to our familial dynamic.  
I speak from Kinnelon

We all speak together, but more apart.  
Let our voices be heard as individuals.  
In dialogue is where it must start.

Nadeem, Basil, Magdy, Karimah, Dafna & Tarek

## UNTITLED

away from home, I feel so alone  
coming to a place with so much space

in the morning counselors say "get up"  
campers say "please don't disturb"

dancing in the small hall is fun  
not so much morning line up  
with the rising sun  
pancakes, captain crunch and peanut butter  
always on fire is the bread toaster

we play frisbee or american football  
we all love basketball (yeah ron)  
craving to be in club 75  
on high ropes an intense high five

rush to phone calls during free time  
who cares to come back on time

pasta, couscous and fish  
at dinner will be brownies (I wish)

in the rest hour stay in your bunk  
no food, beware of the chipmunk

evening activities in the big hall  
but I miss the city mall

## NOW

no more do I feel alone  
no more sickness for my home

three exciting weeks at camp made me see  
a wonderful dream

a dream of a world  
with no lakes of blood

I have no identity  
other than I believe in humanity

children will nurture their dreams  
no violence, no screams

we'll stop yelling at our enemies  
we'll join hands to make new families

**Jasir (Lahore)**

## WE ALL HAVE WON

Not a day goes by that I don't  
think about Seeds,  
I feel as though the memories  
have become weeds.

I could pull them all out  
and forget them for a bit,  
But I'd rather embrace them  
and just have a sit.

My life seems full of love  
that can never be lost,  
I wouldn't trade any of this  
for some measly cost.

I know the days of laughter  
and fun won't come back to me,  
But I'll never forget and imagine  
that I could just cross that big sea.

The only thing  
I could ever ask for,  
Would be to tell you all  
to just open that door.

Don't let the fear of being disliked  
keep you away,  
For each kind smile will help  
bring another day.

Though peace may  
need some willing time,  
I know that this love  
will stay on the line.

So don't forget what you have done,  
Or it will all equal none,  
Though I really believe  
we all have won.

**Emily (Rockland, Maine)**

PHOTO CREDIT: MADELEINE PRYOR



## tushar gandhi

### The great-grandson of Mahatma Gandhi answers questions from Seeds about nonviolence, Indo-Pak peace, and politicians

**What do you perceive to be the biggest obstacle to achieving peace between India and Pakistan?**

The biggest obstacle to peace between India and Pakistan is the baggage of the past that we continue to carry on our backs.

This is not a burden we can see and feel; it is a burden of guilt, anger, hate and distrust that we have refused to shed in so many decades.

The memory of the violence that occurred during the time of our independence and the partitioning of the territory to create Pakistan and the subsequent transfer of populations still festers in our hearts. The three conflicts and the undeclared war over Kashmir have only added to the hatred.

Pakistan too fears that India may

one day cut off their water supply and allow that nation to turn into a desert wasteland. This distrust of each other and each others' intentions adds to the vitiated atmosphere between the two nations.

After Partition, Babu [Gandhi] expressed his desire to go to Pakistan and travel amongst its people. He did not wish to launch a campaign to reunite the two nations or erase the border between the two nations. What he did intend to do, however, was to have person-to-person contact and build bridges of love and bonds of trust and faith between the people so that one day, the geographic border dividing the two nations would become inconsequential.

The biggest hurdle obstructing us from achieving everlasting peace is our own prejudices and distrust and the lack of contact between us and them.

**Your great-grandfather and father advocated nonviolent activism. What about you?**

I believe in the efficacy of nonviolence. Violence only begets violence. It can never achieve long-lasting peace, because the creed of violence thrives on counter violence and violence can never be countered by counter violence.

People can be subjugated for a while by the terror of violence, but once the fear subsides or they gain the ability to retaliate, they perpetuate the chain of violence.

Babuji said, "an eye for an eye will end up making the whole world blind". Complete destruction is the ultimate result of violence.

I believe in nonviolence, but like my great-grandfather, I also believe that in extreme situations, one is left with no options but war. For him, it was only af-

PHOTO CREDIT: TUSHAR GANDHI

## **“Never lose faith in nonviolence. The votaries of violence are fanatically committed to their philosophy and belief. You should be equally fanatical about peace and nonviolence.”**

ter everything else failed that he would deem war necessary.

Twice in his life he advocated war, and once he justified it. The two occasions were when first the world came to know of the Nazi atrocities against Jews and other minorities in Europe. Bapu had said that if ever he was to consider war essential, it was to defeat the Nazis and to save their victims.

Then in January 1948, a few days before he was murdered, my great-grandfather warned Pakistan to desist from committing atrocities against minorities in Pakistan and from its intrusions into border towns and hamlets.

He warned Pakistan that if it did not stop, India would be forced to wage war. When India sent troops to Kashmir to drive out the insurgents, the brigadier general went to Bapu to secure his blessings and asked for orders. He asked Bapu whether or not he should use nonviolence against the invaders.

Bapu told him that if the Government of India had sent him to tackle the insurgents, he would have fought a nonviolent battle to drive them out. But the Government of India had decided to send in the army, and as soldiers, it was their duty to fight if necessary to protect the territorial integrity of the motherland.

I too believe that there is a point beyond which if nonviolence fails, then use of violence can be justified. What I object to is the attitude of resorting to violence right from the beginning.

### **Do you have any advice for young people like us who are seeking peace through nonviolence?**

Never lose faith in nonviolence. The votaries of violence are fanatically committed to their philosophy and belief. You should be equally fanatical about peace and nonviolence. A new beginning can only be made when there is no bitterness or rancor about the happenings of the past. A nonviolent movement ensures that the one who is defeated does not feel humiliated

in defeat or even needs feel defeated. This ensures that change comes about through mutual respect and a friendship born out of understanding and love. Seeds of Peace must, as its name suggests, sprout and grow crops of peace.

### **Are there any good examples of politicians who also adhere to Gandhian principles? Or are those principles better suited for other types of leaders?**

Among the present crop of politicians, it is very difficult to find persons who can be vouched for as far as morality, adherence to ethics, and having the integrity to resist corruption and to be honest and diligent in performing their task.

What I can safely say is that I cannot name a single politician who is an upholder of Gandhian values and beliefs. Many politicians declare themselves followers of Bapu, but this is a mere sham. Not a single politician comes anywhere close to resembling Bapu in real life.

Having said that, I would ask whether we find citizens among us Indians who are morally upright, law abiding, and honest—all while having access to the system of corruption. When it suits us, we break laws. When we want to make our lives easy, we bribe. And whenever we can, we use influence to gain favors.

Politicians, after all, emerge from our society and acquire the bad habits that they see and experience around them.

So we all—all of us—are responsible for the decline in the caliber of our leaders, since the rot is within us, and politicians and leaders are mere reflections of society.

### **What are some of the stories you've heard about your great-grandfather through your relatives?**

It is unfortunate that I was born a decade after he was murdered, and so I did not get to interact with him and learn from him.

My grandmother and father spent many months living with Ba and Bapu in their various ashrams. They witnessed many incidents which later became stories.

Recently, my father published a book called *Legacy of Love*, a mini-memoir of his childhood he spent with Ba and Bapu (available at [www.gandhiforchildren.org](http://www.gandhiforchildren.org)).

My favorite story is when my father lied to my grandfather, and my grandfather decided to atone for his sin of not inculcating an unflinching adherence to truth in his children.

They were in the city of Durban when my grandfather realized that my father had lied to him. So he decided that he would walk back home. It was a 22-mile walk, and my father says it was the worst kind of punishment he had to endure.

My father crept along behind his father in a car to illuminate my grandfather's path. My father is now 78 years old, but he vividly remembers that day as if it happened yesterday, and since that day he has never casually lied.

This is a prime example of nonviolent parenting.

### **What are the aims of the Mahatma Gandhi Foundation?**

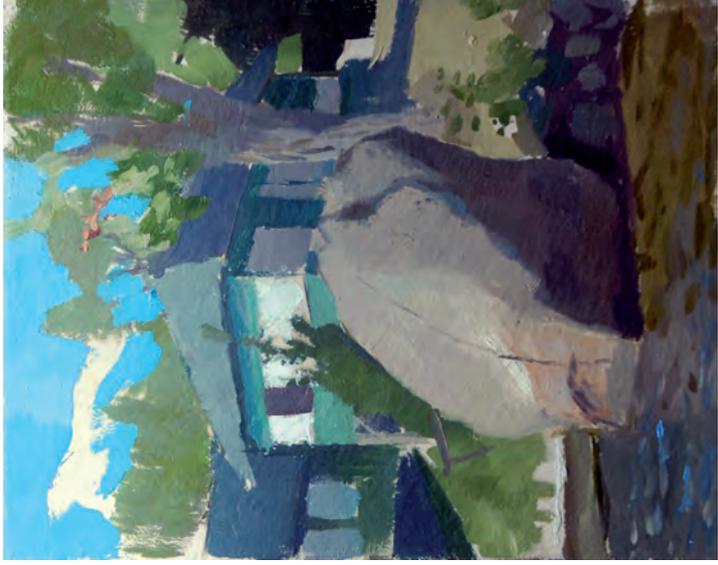
I established the Mahatma Gandhi Foundation (MGF) in 1998 to create an electronic archive for everything pertaining to my great-grandfather.

The objectives of the Foundation are to work for peace, nonviolence and equality, and to empower the underprivileged worldwide.

The Foundation works to promote computer education among underprivileged citizens of our nation. It also works in the fields of human rights, secularism, and equitable existence for all.

Recently, the Foundation established a chapter in Mexico, where it will work for nutrition security for children and education and justice for the underprivileged.

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