

UK Friends of the Bereaved Families Forum (FBFF)

Newsletter 30

March 2013



Dear Friends,

Welcome to the March FBFF newsletter. This month we have a round-up of all the achievements of Parents Circle Families Forum in Israel and Palestine during 2012. As usual, there has been an amazing variety of work carried out – from classroom visits to narrative project meetings, from the summer camp for teenagers to social networking through the Crack In The Wall project.

The message is clear: if Israelis and Palestinians who have paid the highest price in the conflict can sit down together and work for peace and reconciliation, then surely others can too. Read also about Michaela who has organised two fundraising screenings of *Two-Sided Story* in Brighton to help promote the peace and reconciliation work which is going on.

We're always happy to hear about other organisations promoting peace and reconciliation between Palestinians and Israelis and this month we feature the work of Braveheart Women – Israelis, Palestinians and Americans who are getting together to further the cause of peace and mutual understanding.

We are planning a series of screenings of the new documentary *Two-Sided Story* all over the UK. If you are a member of a local group or organisation and would like to host a screening of the film to raise awareness of the peace and reconciliation work going on and raise funds for the organisation, please do let us know.

Thank you.

Diane Taylor

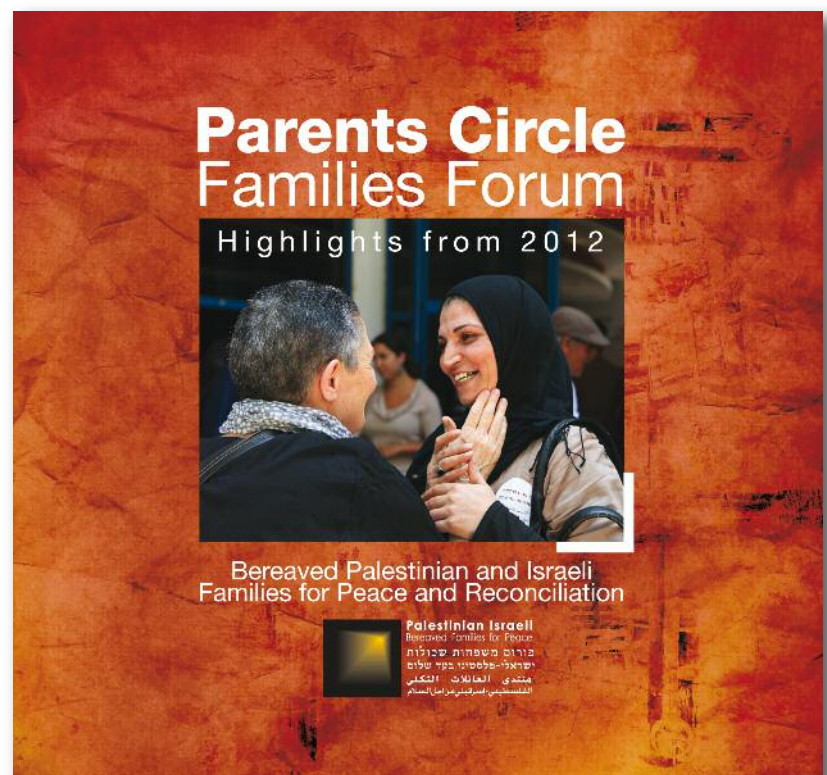
FBFF Manager

CRACK IN THE WALL BRIDGES BORDERS WITH MORE THAN 10,000 USERS

Launched in April 2012, Crack in the Wall now has more than 10,000 users. The Facebook-based project allows Israelis and Palestinians to communicate thanks to simultaneous Arabic and Hebrew translation.

The largest number of users come from Gaza and Tel Aviv but there are also participants from Nablus, Hebron, Ramallah, Jerusalem and Haifa as well as from other countries, including the Philippines, Saudi Arabia and Syria. Many more joined during the Gaza war.

Crack In The Wall is a finalist in the 2013 Intercultural Innovation Award.



NARRATIVE PROJECT DEEPENS TRUST AND EMPATHY

Groups of Israelis and Palestinians from similar backgrounds – such as artists, social activists, grandmothers and teachers – got together for a series of meetings to explore and understand ‘the other’ better.

A survey of attitudes of participants found that 71% improved their level of trust and

empathy with the other side, 68% increased their knowledge and narrative of the other and 77% said that the programme increased their belief in the possibility of reconciliation.

Eighty per cent of those who took part showed an increased willingness to participate in peace building activities.



After these programmes concluded, the social activists, mental health workers and

educationalists from both sides have continued to meet independently.

50 AT SUMMER CAMP

Fifty Palestinian and Israeli youngsters got together for a few days for the annual summer camp in 2012. Most of the children were from bereaved families. On the last day of the camp parents attended.

The youngsters are still communicating with each other via Facebook, long after the camp finished.

MEETINGS TARGET SCHOOLS AND ADULTS

More than 300 meetings took place in 2012 targeting 11,000 youngsters and adults.

Ninety-four per cent of participants said they found the meetings interesting, 82% said

they would tell their family and friends about them, and 70% said the meetings encouraged them to get more involved with reconciliation and dialogue.

Research from Beer Sheva

University has confirmed that dialogue meetings in schools influence the attitudes of students to ‘the other’.

Below: A joint meeting of Israeli and Palestinian facilitators.



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TWO-SIDED STORY MAKING WAVES

We are organising screenings of our new documentary *Two-Sided Story* all over the UK.

Michaela (*right*), one of our supporters, has organised two screenings in her home town of Brighton. Both attracted diverse audiences who were keen to discuss the issues raised by the documentary at length.

‘I think the film is a real eye-opener,’ said Michaela.

‘It gives people a bit of hope about the situation in the Middle East.

‘I feel very strongly about this and I would like others to share my passion.’

She added that she is impressed with the techniques PCFF uses – such as getting Israelis to pretend they are Palestinians and *vice versa* so that they can really put themselves in the shoes of the other.



‘You can see that when people start to think differently because they have a better understanding of the other there is a ripple effect which can influence others,’ she said.

Enormous thanks to Michaela for organising the screenings, raising hundreds of pounds for the charity and spreading awareness of the peace and reconciliation work in Israel/Palestine.

PEACE NEWS FROM ELSEWHERE...

OXYTOCIN PROJECT LAUNCHED

BraveHeart Women is a global, internet-based organisation, with representatives in more than 80 countries and almost a half a million members. It is based in the Los Angeles area,

Last October 33 Western women chosen by BraveHeart Global Vision went to Jerusalem for a four-day collaboration with 33 women from Israel and Palestine. It is known as the Oxytocin Experiment, now called the Oxytocin Project, which began in 2009. It is a unique project due to culminate in the Middle East in 2014. A documentary will be released worldwide in 2015 – its purpose to integrate a new wave

of peaceful, global collaboration.

It all began with a three-day conference in 2010. More than 500 women took part, including 11 Israelis and 11 Palestinians. The event generated positive vibes between all the different women gathered together. In July 2012, more than 50 women from Israel, from Palestine, and from the Western world gathered in Jerusalem to launch the Oxytocin Project.

■ Oxytocin and adrenaline are hormones released within our bodies at various times. The effect of adrenaline is more widely understood, as the immediate rush... like a soldier

experiences in combat. Oxytocin is the hormone that creates the feeling one receives after a comforting hug, or by being greeted with a delightfully infectious smile. It is also activated by a deep, audible exhalation of breath. The experiment ties this in with true connection and collaboration.

Anxiety, on the other hand, is adrenaline-based and is a blockage to peaceful feelings, whether between two people, two communities, or two countries. The aim of the project is to continue to bring many different women together in a spirit of peace and cooperation.

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UK Friends of the Bereaved Families Forum (FBFF)

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