

UK Friends of the Bereaved Families Forum (FBFF)

Newsletter 36

February 2014



NARRATIVE PROJECT BUILDS TRUST AND EMPATHY, RESEARCH SHOWS

Almost nine out of ten participants in 'narrative groups' run for Israelis and Palestinians by the Parents Circle-Families Forum (PCFF) emerged with increased empathy for the other side, according to a report on the organisation's work in 2013.

And more than eight out of ten participants (81.6%) showed a more positive perception of 'the other'.

Eighty-five per cent of the participants showed an increased level of trust, and 72% said they were more willing to be engaged in activities promoting peace.

The Parallel Narrative Project is an adult education programme which brings together groups of Israeli and Palestinian 'agents for change' to explore their national and individual stories. In 2013 there were four such groups including a total of 120 people, among them journalists, social workers and leaders of civil society. Together, they attended trust-building sessions, history workshops and visits to significant places in each other's history.

PCFF also led 413 dialogue



Doubi Schwartz, Co-Executive Director of PCFF (centre), chats to Palestinian and Israeli participants in one of the narrative groups

meetings involving 12,000 young people in Israel and the West Bank. Each meeting involved one bereaved Israeli and one bereaved Palestinian facilitator sharing their stories of bereavement and guiding the participants (mainly high school students) through a discussion about the conflict and the possibility of reconciliation.

In the course of the year, PCFF started a new project made up of

a two-phase dialogue meeting that included showing the documentary, *Two Sided Story* (a film that follows the journey of one of the narrative groups). More than 75 screenings of *Two Sided Story* have been held in Israel and Palestine.

Research following this project revealed that 80% of Israeli participants and 70% of Palestinians had a more positive perception of the other.

The Parents Circle-Families Forum (PCFF) consists of more than 600 Palestinians and Israelis who have lost an immediate family member in the Middle East conflict. PCFF works to drive a reconciliation process among Israelis and Palestinians as a necessary catalyst for a negotiated agreement. It works to imbue both sides with understanding and empathy rather than hatred and revenge. PCFF provides the

opportunity for Israelis and Palestinians to engage in dialogue. In the context of conflict, the two peoples remain alienated from one another, a separation which is fortified by feelings of fear, hatred, mistrust and dehumanization of the other. PCFF's activities aim to prevent further bereavement on both sides, to demand a peaceful resolution to the conflict and to educate the public towards reconciliation.

A PEACE LESSON FROM SOUTH AFRICA

The possibility that an Israel-Palestine peace process could learn lessons from reconciliation efforts in South Africa is explored in *One Day After Peace*, which recounts one woman's difficult journey towards building peace, and the value of seeking to understand 'the other side' in order to do so.

As someone who experienced both conflicts first-hand, Robi Damelin wonders about this. Born in South Africa during the Apartheid era, she later lost her son, who was serving with the Israeli army in the occupied territories. At first she attempted to start a dialogue with the Palestinian who killed her child. When her initial overtures were rejected, she embarked on a journey back to South Africa to learn more about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's efforts to overcome years of enmity.

Robi's thought-provoking journey leads from a place of deep personal pain to a belief that a better future is possible.

The film is not only educational

in terms of its treatment of this period in South African and Israeli/Palestinian history, but its themes provide a rich stimulus for people to consider their own perspectives on conflict resolution. It is also the personal story of a mother coming to terms with the loss of her son and choosing peace over violence.

Robi is coming to the North of England in March to show the film and talk about her experiences (see details below). Her visit has been partly funded

by Manchester City Council as part of International Women's Day. Her visit to the UK has been underwritten by the charity Windows UK which liaised with other organisations to build a series of four other events around Robi's visit.

These will be at Cheshire Reform Congregation (Menorah Synagogue); BIMA (Belief In Meditation and Arbitration); Sinai Synagogue, Leeds; and a Rochdale-based Muslim women's group.



Reconciliation South African-style: a scene from 'One Day After Peace' in which a bereaved mother talks face-to-face with the man who killed her daughter.

ROBI'S ITINERARY – AND CONTACT DETAILS

Friday 7th March, 9.30am to 2.30pm

'Women as Peacemakers'

BIMA, 2 Hardman Street, Manchester, M3 3AA.

Details: zaza@bimagroup.org

Friday 7th March, 5.30 to 9.30pm

Talk followed by *Erev Shabbat* service and *chavurah* supper with Q&A

Sinai Synagogue, Roman Avenue, Leeds, LS8 2AN

Details: yaakov.atik@ntlworld.com

Saturday 8th March, 7.00 to 10.00pm

International Women's Day event: Showing of film 'One Day After Peace' followed by Q&A

Cross Street Chapel, Cross Street, Manchester, M2 1NL.

Details: www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/one-day-after-peace-film-screening-and-discussion-tickets-748973199

Sunday 9th March, 10.30am to 12.30pm

Meeting with Muslim women's group

1st Floor, Fourways House, 57 Hilton Street, Manchester, M1 2EJ.

Details: pasha@pasha.org.uk

Sunday 10th March, 7.00 to 10.00pm

Showing of film 'One Day After Peace' followed by Q&A

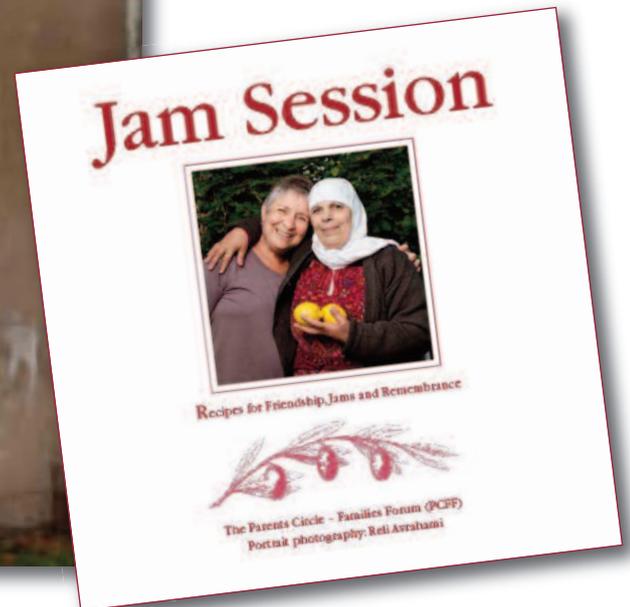
Cheshire Reform Congregation, Menorah Synagogue, 198 Altrincham Road, Manchester M22 4RZ

Details: www.menorah.org.uk/whats-on/oneday/



Left: Hanan Lubadeh from Nablus, one of the Palestinian and Israeli women whose traditional recipes feature in 'Jam Session'.

Below: The book cover.



'Jam Session' is a collection of jam and pickle recipes that emerged from the work of the 50 members of the PCFF women's group. The

recipes they shared in their collective jam-making sessions will soon be available in printed form, bringing the best of Israeli

and Palestinian cuisine to a wider audience. Proceeds from the sale of the book will help to further PCFF's work on the ground.

Please support FBFF's work with an on-line credit card donation:



Donate with JustGiving

Legacy scheme

Are you a lawyer? Would you be willing to help FBFF with a little *pro bono* advice as we set up a legacy scheme to boost our fund-raising efforts?

We envisage your contribution would be limited to helping us draft a suitable clause to be included in donors' wills and not a major ongoing commitment.

If you are prepared to help us, please contact mike.cowan2@gmail.com



STOP! PEACE CROSSROADS AHEAD...

'The majority want peace.'

This is the dramatic message on the banner displayed by PCFF members as they grab the attention of motorists at the Beit Lid crossroads near Netanya.

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