

2018: Our two years milestone!

Since our first newsletter in September 2017, many things have happened. So it is about time to catch up!

Disturbing the Peace / Combatants for Peace

During the first week of October, B8 of Hope screened the multiple award-winning film ***Disturbing The Peace***. This documentary follows former enemy combatants – Israeli soldiers from elite units and Palestinian fighters, many of whom served years in prison – who have joined together to challenge the status quo and say “enough”. The film reveals their transformational journeys from soldiers committed to armed battle to nonviolent peace activists, leading to the creation of combatants for peace.

Watch the trailer

The screenings took place at different venues in Geneva and region: Ciné 17, Ecole Internationale de Genève on the three Campuses (Grande Boissière, Châtaigneraie and Nations) and Le Rosey Concert Hall. We would like to take this opportunity to **express our deepest gratitude** to these entities for opening their doors to us and giving visibility to this powerful documentary (available on Netflix - for those who missed it).

Each screening was followed by a short panel with the film director and producer Stephen Apkon and co-producer Marcina Hale and/or the protagonists of the film, Chen Alon (Israeli) and Sulaiman Khatib (Palestinian), co-founders of CFP.

A total of 1000 guests attended these different screenings. Some funds were collected thanks to very generous guests and the integrity of the donations went towards the three following projects of Combatants for Peace:

1. **The Theatre Group**, a Palestinian Israeli peace-making activity which includes 12 Palestinian and 12 Israeli actors who put into drama form personal stories of the members of the group. They perform in front of different audiences (from both sides) and open the dialogue with them. An interactive activity which is very transformative.
2. **The Auja Playground**. The CFP Israeli and Palestinian activists worked together with the Bedouin community in Auja, a small village near Jericho, to build a much needed playground for the children of this area. Social actions of this type strengthen the relations among the activists themselves and with the local communities.
3. **The Women’s Group**. The women’s group emphasizes on issues which particularly affect women in the conflict. For months the members have been meeting in both bi-national (Palestinians and Israelis together) and national groups. At various workshops the participants get to know each other – and every member shares her personal story. They share the tools they have at their disposal, supporting each other, as women, living in the conflict.

Following the success of our Disturbing the Peace screenings last fall, B8 of Hope has been invited to organize more screenings at two additional Geneva private schools, Ecole

Moser and Institut Florimont, during the month of February 2018. Each time, three of B8 of Hope Steering committee members were present to answer questions of students after the screenings. We were also given the opportunity to talk about our work as a Swiss-based association promoting grassroots initiatives of dialogue, bridge-building and non-violence in Israel and Palestine. A heartfelt thank you to Ecole Moser and to Institut Florimont for having us!

We are now hoping to extend the experience to Geneva public schools.

The message of this film is universal and could only benefit to the future generations in Switzerland and elsewhere:

“At a time in our world when societies are becoming more polarized and painfully few people are speaking of nonviolent solutions to our conflicts, popular movements like combatants for peace have the potential to capture the public’s imagination and shift the conversation from the inevitability of conflict, to the possibility and process of establishing lasting peace. Disturbing the peace evokes universal themes relevant to us all and inspires us to become active participants in the creation of our world.”

Please contact us (info@B8ofhope.org) if you are interested in organizing a screening!

Last but not least, we would like to add that the Combatants for Peace have been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize for a second time, this year. We wish them the best of luck – they so deserve it!

Women Wage Peace

After their amazing *March of Hope* in October (which we were the sponsors of), with more than 33 000 participants versus 19 000 in 2016, Women Wage Peace keeps busy, lobbying at the Knesset and organizing encounters and functions with thousands of members from the right, the center and the left of the political spectrum, Jews and Arabs, religious and secular, from the center of the country and the periphery, women from kibbutzim and from settlements, all of whom are united in a demand for **a mutually binding non-violent accord, agreeable to both sides.**

Delegations of Palestinian women join actions of this Israeli movement when given permits. Women Wage Peace works throughout Israel to raise awareness and engage the public in a discussion about the feasibility of a political resolution. It creates opportunities for dialogue with individuals and groups through formal and informal meetings within the communities. The movement also organizes national events, such as demonstrations and protests, in order to pressure decision makers to work toward reaching a viable peace agreement.

They are being invited all over the world. One of their focus this year is promoting "The Security Council resolution (S/RES/1325) on women, peace and security adopted on 31 October 2000. The resolution reaffirms the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peace-building, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and in post-conflict reconstruction. It stresses the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security. Resolution 1325 urges all actors to increase the participation of women and incorporate gender perspectives in all United Nations peace and security efforts. It also

calls on all parties to conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse, in situations of armed conflict."

Our president Mehra Rimer was with WWP in Paris in November 2017, in support of their panel at an event organized by La Maison Itshak Rabin, in presence of several French politicians, including former Prime Minister Manuel Valls.

The speakers from Women Wage Peace were Marie-Lyne Smadja and Amal Rahin. They were joined by Huda Abuarquob, regional director of Alliance for Middle East Peace (Allmep). Huda has an active role in WWP, which is a member of Allmep.

During that same Paris trip, Mehra Rimer had the opportunity to meet with Hanna Assouline, brilliant young French film-maker, who is working on a documentary about Women Wage Peace called *Les Guerrières de la Paix* (The Warriors for Peace). B8 of Hope participated in the funding of this inspiring documentary which will be ready for screening in the coming months. Stay tuned , we will let you know when and where!

[Watch the trailer](#)

Judur / Shorashim / Roots

Our first flagship initiative is continuing its efforts to encourage dialogue and bridge-building in Gush Etsion, an area where many tensions exist. The activists of Roots believe that in a context of ignorance and denial of the other's identity, humanity and narrative from both ends, any peace deal would fail, even if politicians reach a solution. Roots prepares the human ground work for a sustainable peace. We are taking this opportunity to congratulate Khaled Abu Awwad on his new role as co-director of Roots!

The activities of Roots that we support are essentially the Pre-Army Academy meetings during the current school year. They consist of 2 activists (an Israeli settler and a Palestinian) meeting with groups of students, future soldiers, including those coming from religious families and schools in the region of Gush Etsion and Jerusalem. The Israeli activist (who is himself from a religious background) and the Palestinian activist each talk about their narratives. For these students it is often the first time they interact with a Palestinian. The joint message of the Israeli and the Palestinian activists to their audience is that we need to humanize the Other, the Other needs respect and dignity; the security of Israel depends on this as well. A quote from a Nachson student after hearing Roots activists: *"I didn't think that there could be a partner for peace before. Now I know there is."* Shifts in the mentalities are an important aspect of Roots work.

The other Roots activities that we are supporting are the children and youth summer camps. We are very proud to partner with another Swiss organization, [Coexistences](#), around their project of bringing 30 young adults from Roots Youth Group to Switzerland for a week of dialogue and hiking in the mountains at the end of August. Thank you Coexistences for including us in this initiative! We feel that we deeply share your values and principles.

Another good news about Roots concerns the documentary *The Field* by film director

Mordechai Vardi which was just awarded as Best Feature Documentary 2018 at the Peace on Earth Film Festival. *The Field* is about an unlikely partnership between Israelis and Palestinian in Gush Etsion, that led to the creation of the joint grassroots initiative Judur/Shorashim/Roots, by its co-founders Ali Abu Awwad and Shaul Judelman.

[Watch the trailer](#)

Hopefully we will be able to see it in Geneva and region! We will let you know!

Keshet Eilon and Polyphony Foundation Scholar in Residence joint project

Music is good for the soul – it is also a great tool for bridge-building!

A strategic partnership has developed between two great schools of music: Polyphony Foundation and Keshet Eilon Music Center. This partnership is based on the shared understanding that Music and the Arts have the power to transcend long existing cultural and social boundaries between the Arab and Jewish communities in Israel. Driven by this belief, both entities have been working on creating opportunities for Arab and Jewish youth to make music together while encouraging excellence in the field of classical music.

The joint program The Scholar in Residence Seminar aims at creating a highly meaningful shared musical experience for talented young Arab and Jewish musicians, believing that such safe and neutral environment will enable them to overcome long existing cultural barriers and discover how much they have in common rather than the widely common misconceptions and stereotypes. We are very proud to be among the sponsors of this inspiring program

Around Ali Abu Awwad, the activist who inspired B8 of Hope

Ali Abu Awwad, the Palestinian non-violence activist founder of **Taghyeer/Change** (the Palestinian National Non-Violence Movement) and co-founder of Judur/Shorashim/Roots who was B8 of Hope's key inspiration from the start, was in Paris in September for a series of conferences at Le Monde Festival, Sciences-Po Paris, The American Graduate School of Paris and at Ecole Jeanine Manuel. The last two were organized by B8 of Hope. He also came to Geneva in December, on his way to the Zurich Human Rights Film Festival.

The B8 of Hope Steering Committee took the opportunity to have some intense work sessions with him, around Taghyeer/Change and Karama (the project of an incubator for non-violence initiatives).

Ali is stepping out of Judur/Shorashim/Roots, as a co-director, and being replaced by his brother Khaled, to be able to focus himself more on his other projects Taghyeer and Karama.

Taghyeer / Change

The movement is about engaging Palestinian society on a way forward to achieve social change and national goals through nonviolence (and non-violent developments).

For Taghyeer, the past months were challenging and in big part focused on improving their own internal organization. B8 of Hope has been deeply involved in the process alongside our indispensable partners, the US Friends of Taghyeer Movement, with whom we have been helping the movement get a better structure and governance.

On the ground, Taghyeer has been involved in helping underprivileged communities in different parts of the West Bank. One example is the support of the women's council of Jubbet ad Dibh (West Bank). Taghyeer brought together 25 Palestinian activists, including students from the social action class at Bard Al Quds University, and volunteers from Hebron, Olabadiya and Beit Ummar. This was phase one of self-development work in which this marginalized village takes responsibility for its future as Taghyeer helps build a support partnership. It began with cleaning and painting buildings, planting trees and placing garbage receptacles around the entrance to the village and will move on to training and tutoring for Jubbet ad Dibh youth. Phase Two will see work on reconstruction/rehabilitation of a meeting/volunteer center building and a site for a health clinic being supported by J Street U in the US and other international supporters.

We hope that Taghyeer's work will achieve a greater dimension. We expect youth chapters to be developed in the West Bank in the coming months for the message of Taghyeer to be spread more widely among the new generation.

Activities will keep being based on community-prioritized needs for social development, including projects on women's empowerment, youth leadership, education and individual rights. Taghyeer will also cooperate in peace building through a committee that engages Israelis, including Palestinian citizens of Israel.

"Nonviolence will not erase our painful past nor the fears of an uncertain future. Nonviolence is about taking responsibility today, about practicing the art of our humanity no matter the circumstances... To celebrate our existence, to refuse to be a victim, to give taste to our lives. The Taghyeer Movement is about deciding to step forward into a new reality of freedom, dignity, humanity and peace."

- Ali Abu Awwad

Karama – a true Oasis of Peace

The Abu Awwad family owns a piece of land in Gush Etsion (Palestinian Territories, Area C), half way between Bethlehem and Hebron. The land is located near a bloc of settlements and the Palestinian village of Beit Ummar. Its location is ideal as both Palestinians and Israelis can access it. Ali, his brothers and nephews turned this piece of family land into a true Oasis of Peace which they actually named Karama (Dignity in Arabic). The initiative Judur/Shorashim/Roots holds its activities there.

Today, Ali's ambitions have become even greater for Karama by willing to turning it into an ambitious incubator/center for non-violence initiatives and developments and open it to more organizations and projects.

B8 of Hope is very much involved in the project of this incubator, together with a coalition of supporters abroad: Shape the Narrative (Spain), Friends of Taghyeer (USA), Threshold Foundation (USA), and The Forest Trust/Earthworms Foundation (Switzerland).

One of the main aspects of this project is combing peace and ecology through the Earthworm project. Its objective is to bring people together as caretakers of the land. The

project will show how humble actions, such as composting with worms, can help reduce waste, heal the land and create abundant and nutritious food. Palestinians and Israelis will come to learn how to integrate those practices in their daily lives. In the spirit of the work of Taghyeer, earthworm composting is part of a wider nonviolent movement as daily acts of care for a land that has suffered so much from divisions and conflicts.

It was great seeing you Ali! Much love from your B8 of Hope supporters!

Synergy, Synergy !

2018 will be the year of Synergy. One of B8 of Hope's mission is to create more collaboration between the organizations and initiatives that we support. B8 of Hope is supporting a powerful Non-Violence Communication (NVC) Workshop co-organized by Combatants for Peace and another amazing organization The Holy Land Trust.

The workshop is facilitated by professional experts on NVC with participants from 30 different organizations and individuals committed to peace, nonviolence, justice, and freedom in the Palestinian, Israeli, and international communities to engage in a powerful process of Nonviolent Communication (NVC). The workshop consists of a series of deep discussions, trainings, and strategies aimed to transform and address the key challenges that keep them in the cycle of "insanity", not within the conflict, but within the peace and nonviolence work itself.

The Palestinian and Israeli peace activists have reached the conclusion that it is time to reflect. Coming from a place of profound trust and commitment to peace and nonviolence to each other, they have decided to embark on the rare and unique process of exposing the internal challenges they face and engaging in Nonviolent Communication (NVC) to address them. Activists will not only be invited to find common ground between them and to open up (in a safe and held space). The space will be designed to understand and negotiate deep, unspoken, or unrecognized challenges that are first difficult to understand or frightening to engage in.

Objectives

- Capacity building among peace and nonviolence leaders for increased resilience and transformation in dealing constructively with internal conflicts and diversity
- inspiring a culture of cooperation, participation, creativity and resourcefulness drawn from collective intelligence.
- Capacity building for creative in strategic diversity for social action, rooted in nonviolent strategies.
- Development of continuing healing and Nonviolent Communication (NVC) trainings to foster local autonomy.
- Increasing personal, professional and community development by increasing exposure to educational options and opportunities.
- Development and facilitation of high-impact joint projects that solve problems.

Scope of Work

- Participants will work on real-life situations, so as to connect the new models with surrounding realities and challenges they face on a daily basis.
 - Gain self-awareness of communication patterns/habits that contribute to disconnection, and of the capacity of choice.
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- Experiment with offering and receiving deep listening.
- Learn to listen for universal human needs beyond actions and words, and to distinguish needs from strategies – find common ground for empathy.
- Understand feelings as our feedback systems & distinguish feelings from judgments and facts.
- Distinguish observable facts from inferences – create a sense of shared reality.
- Distinguish requests from demands – practice participation and sustainability in co-creating shared realities.
- Distinguishing and learning to deal with structures and dynamics of power and privilege.
- Practice authentic expression and empathic listening.
- Responding to and delivering hard-to-hear messages.
- Practicing self-empathy – enhance resilience capacity.
- Escaping the cycle of violence – align with life-oriented references.
- Daily practices of check-in and check-out.
- Home-groups practice for processing and integration.
- Building capacity to deal constructively with conflicts that arise from differing perspectives and learning to go beyond polarity.
- Adoption of strategic innovation in dealing with conflict, and the new professional possibilities available through integrating NVC model.

We will update you about the outcome of this workshop in our next edition!

Other interesting quotes and messages by activists we admire:

- *“Not one Jerusalem stone is worth even one drop of blood of one little girl!”*,
Rami Elhanan from The Parents Circle - Families Forum (Rami's little girl Smadar was a victim of the conflict. The Parents Circle is an organization of bereeved families that strive for NOT having any new members)

- [A letter to President Trump](#) by Ali Abu Awwad

- [Rav Hanan Schlesinger's piece on Jerusalem](#) (A real roller coaster – please read until the end and you will understand!)

B8 of Hope annual report

B8 of Hope 2017 Annual Report has been published. [Read it here](#)
