



COURAGE AND COMPASSION
IN THE
HOLY
LAND

photography by
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CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF WORLD RELIGIONS, HARVARD DIVINITY SCHOOL



“Are your hearts perhaps stronger and your souls deeper than you imagined? Yes, this is what you came here to do. There is no greater gift than to be given a life of meaning. There is no greater heroism than to bravely represent love in a dark time of fear and danger.” – Doris ‘Granny D’ Haddock

Christianity

“In everything do to others as you would have them do to you;
for this is the law and the prophets.”
Matthew 7:12, New Revised Standard Version

Judaism

“What is hateful to you, do not to your fellow man.
This is the law: all the rest is commentary.”
Talmud, Shabbat 31a

Islam

“None of you [truly] believes until he wishes for his brother
what he wishes for himself.”
Number 13 of Imam “Al-Nawawi’s Forty Hadiths”

Courage and Compassion in the Holy Land

These three quotes, arguably the core values and essence of each and all three religions, are the foundation of this project. The people I honor all live their lives, in significant ways, in accordance with this religious code—to treat their neighbors as they would like to be treated. In this project, I look at the work for peace in two parts: 1) an individual’s inner work and inner peace—having the strength and courage to keep one’s spirit strong and loving, free of hate, especially in the face of adversity and injustice; and 2) the work of relationship, especially with one’s adversaries. I am particularly interested in the relationships between and among people of different religions. It is relatively easy to treat one’s friends and culture-mates as one would like to be treated. It is much more difficult to embrace people who are members of a group who have harmed you, your family or your friends. Yet this is the basis of most (perhaps all) world religions.

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I believe that if there is to be peace in the Holy Land, there must also be justice and the courage to reach across religious and national lines. People must be willing to listen to each other, to walk in each others’ shoes, and to treat each other as they would like to be treated. This needs to happen on a governmental level, at some point, but where it is happening now, in Israel and Palestine, is on the ground—at the grassroots level. The people who I document in this exhibit are playing what could be the critical role in moving the situation from a place of disrespect, distrust, and fear, to one of discovering common values, beliefs, and goals. These people are making history. I am honored and inspired to witness and document their courage and compassion, for I believe that their actions are the greatest stories on the planet today. They are my heroes. *—Pat Westwater-Jong*

Dedication

I dedicate this project to my dad, Bob, who taught me that every member of a democracy has the responsibility to be informed and involved, and to participate in our democracy to ensure that it is healthy and productive; to my mother, Sue, who, when strangers came to our door to instruct her about how to be “saved,” had the chutzpah to invite them in and explain her opinion that Jesus loves everyone, Christian or not; to my children, Jess and Alex, who I adore and who have brought me the greatest joy in my life, and for whom I work hard to make this world a healthier and more compassionate home; to my brother, Don, and sister, Amy—their love has been a steadfast anchor throughout my life; and to my late husband, Tony Jong, my partner, my love, who also pursued social justice, and who proofed my letters to editors, keeping me concisely to the point—not an easy task; and finally, to those people in the Holy Land who have the courage to suffer hate and violence, and yet continue to live their lives with compassion; and to those who leave the comforts of their safe homes to stand by their suffering neighbors. I believe that we are all connected and that each of you is helping to heal all of us. This exhibit and book, sharing my photographs and stories of you, is my thank-you gift, with love, to all of you.

Thank You

Much gratitude goes to the Center for the Study of World Religions at Harvard Divinity School of for hosting this exhibit, in particular to Rebecca Esterson for attending to countless details and for amazing patience through many changes as the exhibit came ever more clearly into focus; to Doris “Granny D” Haddock, for her extraordinary energy, love, and spirit and teaching that “you’re never too old to raise a little hell,” and who modeled working ceaselessly for a better world; to Russ Campbell for attending to endless computer troubles, whether I was at home or wandering around Israel and Palestine; to Interfaith Peacebuilders and the American Friends Service Committee for organizing and leading delegations to the Holy Land; to Andy Blanch, my mentor at the Center for Religious Tolerance, who introduced me to many peacemakers in Israel, and who is a joy and inspiration to work with for peace and justice in Israel and Palestine; to Rob Colclaser for patience and dedication in getting every print right and instructing the “print framing party;” to Allie Colclasser for printing assistance and graciousness with printing sessions running past midnight; to Gail Lamere, Jan Barrett-Chow and “team captain” Janet Tierney for framing the prints for the exhibit; to Joe Carpenito for designing the exhibit poster; to my Yoga teacher, Elizabeth Bunker, for sending me that first email about peacemakers in the Holy Land; to Melissa Bata for curating assistance; to Rama Williams and Milo for help mocking up the exhibit, and Janet Tierney, champion of the mock up process; to Barbara Harlow for hours and days of text editing; to Piali De for slide show talk coaching; to Doug Menuet for helping me prepare for overseas photo journalism work; to Barbara Parente, Anna Lewis, and Michele Phelan for program design; and to all the people who spent time teaching me their stories and allowing me to take their photographs, and who struggle while treating their neighbors as they would like to be treated.

This project is a work in process. These photos were taken in 2008 and 2009. In May and June, 2008, I traveled with a delegation co-sponsored by Interfaith Peacebuilders and the American Friends Service Committee and traveled on my own. In the spring of 2009, I spent two months photographing and interviewing people in Israel and Palestine.

Jerusalem Peacemakers

Founded in 2004, Jerusalem Peacemakers is a network of independent, interfaith, humanitarian peace-builders that promotes peace, justice, reconciliation and a decent life for all people in the Holy Land.

- 1** [PHOTO INSIDE FRONT COVER] Four co-founders of the Jerusalem Peacemakers at the Damascus Gate are blessing the Old City of Jerusalem during The Big Hug, an annual celebration of interfaith prayers and blessings that the Old City of Jerusalem will be a place for people of all religions.
- 2** Ibtisam Mahameed, a religious Muslim feminist member of Jerusalem Peacemakers and member of the Abrahamic Reunion was the inspiration behind the organization, Women Reborn. Women Reborn educates and supports local Muslim women. Ibtisam also facilitates conversations between Israeli Jewish and Muslim women and was given an “Unsung Hero of Compassion” award by the Dalai Lama in the spring of 2009.
- 3** Rabbi Froman lives in the Jewish settlement, Tekoa, in the West Bank. He hopes to live in the West Bank under a Palestinian government where every person, regardless of religion, has equal freedom and equal rights. Ibrahim Abu El Hawa, a Muslim, welcomes travelers at his Peace House on the Mount of Olives in Palestinian East Jerusalem. They are respected leaders and close friends.
- 4** The late Sheik Bukhari lived in the Old City of Jerusalem, where his forefathers have been leaders of the Uzbeki Naqsbandi Sufi Order since 1616. Eliyahu McLean, an Israeli Jew, says, “People always ask me, ‘Are you left wing or right wing?’ And I reply, ‘It takes two wings to fly.’” They have facilitated dialogues among people of all faiths. Eliyahu continues.
- 5** The Big Hug is an afternoon of interfaith prayers and blessings around the wall that surrounds the Old City of Jerusalem. In the evening it culminates in a celebration of singing, drumming, and dancing, at a corner of the Old City Wall, where East and West Jerusalem meet.

*Sources: Personal experience; www.jerusalempeacemakers.org;
www.loversofjerusalem.org (the Big Hug of Jerusalem website)*

Parent's Circle–Family Forum

Parent's Circle–Family Forum is a grassroots organization of Palestinians and Israelis, each of whom has had a close family member killed by a member of the other religion. They meet with one another seeking reconciliation. They talk to groups to promote nonviolent conflict resolution and to prevent more people from losing their loved ones to violence.

- 6 Isha Hadid's brother was killed in 1999 during fighting between Israelis and Palestinians—he had been married for thirty-six days.
- 7 Robi Damelan's son, a member of the peace movement, was killed at a checkpoint, when he was an Israeli soldier on duty in the Occupied Territories.
- 8 Safat Tubak's husband was killed in 2002 during fighting between Palestinians and Israelis in the Old City of Nablus in the Palestinian West Bank.
- 9 Mazen Faraj, whose father was shot by an Israeli soldier during a siege in Bethlehem, and Nir Yesod, whose mother was killed in a rocket attack on their kibbutz.

Sources: Personal interviews; www.theparentscircle.com

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Combatants for Peace

Israelis and Palestinians who were formerly fighters and soldiers work together to raise consciousness in both publics regarding the hopes and suffering of the other side. They do this in order to stop all forms of violence by Palestinian fighters and Israeli soldiers, to educate towards reconciliation and non-violent struggle in both the Israeli and Palestinian societies, and to create political pressure on both governments to stop the cycle of violence, end the occupation and resume a constructive dialog.

- 10 Bassam Aramin, a Palestinian ex-fighter and co-founder of Combatants for Peace received the Courage of Conscience Award at the Peace Abbey in Sherborn, MA in March 2009. He stands in front of a picture of his ten year old daughter, Abir, who was killed by an Israeli soldier when she was walking home from school. Accepting the award with Bassam, though not in this picture, was Israeli ex-soldier, Yaniv Reshef.

*Sources: Personal interview and experience; www.combatantsforpeace.org
www.peaceabbey.org*

Dorothy Naor and the Sharabee Family; Mas'ha, Palestine

Dorothy Naor, an American-Israeli Jewish woman, befriends and supports Palestinian families and informs internationals about the Israeli Occupation of the Palestinian Territories. Dorothy is a member of the Israeli group New Profile, which supports Israeli youth who wish to be conscientious objectors to serving with the Israeli military in the Palestinian Occupied Territories. Dorothy took me to visit some of her Palestinian friends in the West Bank, two of those families are the Sharabees and Sufs.

11 Nazeeh Sharabee is prevented from working his family's olive groves by a portion of the Israeli Separation Wall which does not follow the "Green Line" border between Israel and Palestine, but instead runs through the village of Mas'ha. Mas'ha lost some 90% of its agricultural land when the wall separated the villagers from their land and severely restricted their access to it. In spite of the uncertainty of how to support their family in the future, the Sharabees are committed to non-violently ending the Occupation.

12 Anam Sharabee is the wife of Nazeeh and the mother of their eight children.

13 Dorothy Naor and Baraha, one of the Sharabee daughters.

14 Amer Sharabee blowing bubbles. *Sources: Personal experience and interviews; Dorothy Naor; www.newprofile.org*

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Dorothy Naor and the Suf Family; Hares, Palestine

At age twenty-six Issa Suf became paralyzed from the waist down when Israeli soldiers shot him as he called out to the village children to go indoors. Years later, he reached out to those soldiers through an open letter, offering his forgiveness and welcoming them to his home.

15 Issa Suf is a Palestinian Muslim, married to Faissa.

16 Faissa Suf and her daughter, Hiba, one of three Suf children.

Sources: Personal experience and interviews; Dorothy Naor; Issa Suf's letter to soldiers; Gidron Levy, journalist

Tent of Nations on Daher's Vineyard

Tent of Nations addresses cultural conflicts like those of the Israelis and Palestinians through positive encounters between and among people of different cultures. The Palestinian Christian Nassar family runs Tent of Nations on their hilltop near Bethlehem, where they also manage their olive and almond groves. They have been fighting in the Israeli courts to keep their land since 1991. Just down the hill, Jihan Nassar organizes and manages the Bent Al-reef Empowerment Project for the Muslim women in the village. Groups of people and individuals come from all over the world to visit and volunteer in the groves and at Bent Al-reef. It is illegal for the Nassar family to make any improvements that require cement or wood to any of their buildings, or to add any structures, and if they do, the Israeli government can destroy all their buildings and confiscate the Nassar Vineyard.

A motto they repeat, as they continue to struggle with obstacles to living on their land, "We refuse to be enemies."

- 8** **17** Daoud Nassar speaks for the Nassar family which manages Tent of Nations and farms on the land known as Daher's Vineyard. Daher Nassar purchased this land in 1924.
- 18** Daher's Vineyard, on a hilltop southwest of Bethlehem and surrounded by settlements on the neighboring hilltops, is a piece of land that Jewish settlements and the Israeli government have been trying to acquire since 1991. Unlike many Palestinian landholders, the Nassar family has all the deeds of ownership. The legal battle over their land is now in the Israeli Supreme Court. They grow almonds and olives.
- 19** German youth digging a cistern. He is one of many international volunteers who visit Tent of Nations each year.

Sources: www.tentofnations.org; www.vodpod.com, Peace by Piece video interview with Daoud Nassar; personal experience and interviews

Nomika Zion in Sderot

Sderot is on the border between Israel and Palestinian Gaza. Armed groups in Gaza, which is under Israeli siege, have been shelling Sderot with rockets for years. A number of Sderot's residents have been killed. Nomika calls for a political rather than military resolution between Hamas, the current Gaza government, and the Israeli government. Her article "War Diary from Sderot" is a sharp response to those who glorify attacking Gaza in the name of the people of Sderot. In April 2009, Survivor Corps gave her the Niarchos Prize for Survivorship. Nomika participates in the organization, Other Voice, which is composed of residents of Sderot and Gaza who communicate and have befriended each other.

20 When rockets are fired from Gaza large playground dragons become bomb shelters for children.

21 Children are instructed to wait between the lines inside the dragon bomb shelters, until the rocket fire stops.

22 During Israeli "Operation Cast Lead" attacks on the Palestinian Territory of Gaza, December 2008 to January 2009, journalists and residents would sit on top of this hilltop and watch the bombs fall on Gaza.

Sources: Personal interview; www.HuffingtonPost.com, 1/13/10-War Diary from Sderot; www.landminesurvivors.org; www.othervoice.org/welcome-eng.htm

Bil'in in the West Bank

The Wall, the Separation Barrier constructed by Israel for protection against suicide bombers, goes through the Palestinian town of Bil'in. The Wall does not, as planned, consistently follow the "Green Line" between Israeli and Palestinian lands, but for many miles runs through villages and agricultural lands within the Palestinian Territory. For five years Bil'in residents, Israeli peace activists, and internationals have participated in nonviolent demonstrations against the Wall in Bil'in. Though children sometimes throw stones at the Israeli soldiers, every week mostly peaceful demonstrators have been met with tear gas and sometimes rubber bullets; they have been arrested, injured and even killed. For over a year Israeli soldiers have entered the village of Bil'in in the middle of the night and have taken away youth they believe have been involved in stone throwing and adults who organize the weekly protests, and put them in jail or prison. Bil'in is one of several Palestinian towns where demonstrations are regularly met with Israeli violence. Both the International Criminal Court in The Hague and an Israeli high court have ruled that the portions of the Wall which do follow the Green Line are legal. But where the Wall does not follow the Green Line and confiscates Palestinian land it is illegal and must be rerouted. Nonetheless, the Wall construction through Palestinian villages and farmland has continued. In February 2010 it was announced that the Wall in Bil'in would be re-routed. But by the end of summer 2010, the Wall still stands in Bil'in. The demonstrations continue.

23 Near the site of the weekly demonstrations, this portion of the Wall is a fence.

24 Bil'in girl's birthday celebration with members of Interfaith Peacebuilders and the American Friends Service Committee.

25 Máiread Corrigan-Maguire, 1976 winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, speaking at the Fourth Annual Bil'in International Conference on Popular Nonviolent Resistance in April 2009.

Sources: www.bilin-village.org; Ali Waked, www.ynetnews.com; www.CounterPunch.org; www.peacepeople.com; www.interfaithpeacebuilders.org; www.afsc.org

26 *Women in Black* is an international movement of women for peace. Founded in Israel, they have been peacefully protesting the Israeli Occupation of the Palestinian Territories every Friday at 1:00pm in Hagar Square (in Israeli West Jerusalem), since January 1988, one month after the first Palestinian Intifada (shaking off) broke out. Each week they don black clothing and raise black signs in the shape of a hand with white lettering that read, “Stop the Occupation.” Sympathetic Israeli men, children, and internationals join them. People walk by and engage them in debate. People drive by and threaten them. “What unites us all is our commitment to justice and a world free of violence.” *Sources: personal interviews; www.womeninblack.org*

27 Israeli-Palestinian-Christian-Arab, ***Elias Jabbour*** and his wife ***Heyam***, founders of House of Hope, practice and teach sulha, the Arab method of conflict resolution based on forgiveness. *Sources: Personal interviews; Center for Religious Tolerance website, www.c-r-t.org; book, Sulha, Palestinian Traditional Peacemaking Process by *Elias J. Jabbour**

28 *Sam Bahour* is a Palestinian-American living with his family in Ramallah, West Bank, Palestinian Territory. Sam is a prolific writer on the issues of Palestinian affairs and has been widely published in the Palestinian Territories, the US, and elsewhere. He has traveled to Gaza to bring children who need medical treatment to hospitals in Israel. Sam’s work with the privatization of Palestinian telecommunications was key in establishing the Palestine Telecommunications Company. He serves on the board of Birzeit University, and is a Director of the Arab Islamic Bank. *Sources: Personal interview; epalestine.blogspot.com*

29 *Jiries Mansour* is a Catholic Deacon and principal of the Saint Anthony Latin School in the Arab village of Kfar Rame in Northern Israel. He works with Christian, Muslim, and Jewish students, facilitating their relating with one another across cultural and religious boundaries. He is also a member of the Jerusalem Peacemakers and the Abrahamic Reunion. *Sources: Personal interview and experience; www.celebrationsoflove.com/e-peacemakers.html*

30 Elana Rosenman, an Orthodox Jew from Jerusalem and member of Abrahamic Reunion, works through her non-profit program Trust-Emun, to build trust between Israelis and Palestinians and among people of all Abrahamic religions. In this photograph she is facilitating an interpersonal interfaith workshop at IPCRI, Israel/Palestine Center for Research and Information. *Sources: Personal experience; www.c-r-t.org; www.ipcri.org*

31 Boy with a homemade kite—seen while on a tour of Hebron conducted by a Christian Peacemaker Team volunteer.
Source: ww.cpt.org

32 This girl in a fancy dress is a resident of the Dheisheh Refugee camp, where the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) builds and runs schools, collects garbage, and does what is necessary for residents to survive. *Sources: www.unrwa.org*

12 33 Rabbi Arik Ascherman is founder of the Israeli organization, Rabbis for Human Rights (RHR). He and other members of RHR support efforts for justice for Palestinians by advocating the Jewish values of treating all people as they would like to be treated. He meets with Palestinians to hear grievances and Israeli Jewish settlers to remind them of Jewish law. *Sources: Personal interview and experience; www.rhr-na.org; www.rhr.israel.net*

34 A **Christian Peacemaker Team** volunteer gives a walking tour of Hebron to a delegation co-sponsored by Interfaith Peacebuilders and the American Friends Service Committee. CPT volunteers serve in many courageous capacities in the Occupied Territories. They ask, “What would happen if Christians devoted the same discipline and self-sacrifice to nonviolent peacemaking that armies devote to *war*?” They are dedicated to testing the answer to that question. *Sources: Personal interview and experience; www.cpt.org; www.interfaithpeacebuilders.org; www.afsc.org*





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