

THE “OASIS OF PEACE”
AND THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

A Curriculum for High School Students

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THE “OASIS OF PEACE” **AND THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT**

This curriculum consists of four sections, each with corresponding lessons and activities. Many of the activities encourage classroom discussions, which can be conducted with the full class or in small groups. The lessons were designed primarily for high school students, but could be revised and adjusted to suit middle school students. One activity designed specifically for students in the 7th and 8th grade is also included. The focus of the curriculum is the community of Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam, the “Oasis of Peace,” and the ways in which learning about and discussing the community can foster an open dialogue and understanding of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, conflict in general, conflict resolution and the role of identity in conflict situations.

Objectives:

- To introduce students to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through the eyes of a binational community dedicated to peace, equality and cooperative living.
- To help students understand the role of identity in conflict.
- To help students understand the role of identity in their own lives.
- To increase student awareness and understanding of bias and stereotyping.
- To provide students with insight into the viewpoints of both Palestinians and Israelis as related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and their respective experiences of it.
- To provide students with critical thinking skills and analytical skills as related to media presentations of disputed events/situations.

Assumptions of the Unit:

- The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a conflict between Palestinians and Israelis—two groups with distinct national identities—as opposed to simply between individuals.
- Understanding identity and stereotypes can contribute significantly to an understanding of the conflict.
- Reports from the region and information about the conflict are abundant in American society, but are not always accurate or balanced.
- Learning about and growing to understand a binational community that lives in a commitment to peace can contribute to an improved overall understanding of the conflict.

Materials Needed:

- Background Reading Materials (provided herein)
- 28-minute Video about the “Oasis of Peace”
- Worksheets and Questionnaires (provided herein)

Structure:

- Four Sections w/Lessons and Activities
- Related Readings/Background Materials
- Lesson Expansion Options
- Worksheets/Questionnaires and Discussion Questions
- Teacher Tips and Answer Keys

PART I: INTRODUCTION TO THE “OASIS OF PEACE”

Neve Shalom is Hebrew. Wahat al-Salam is Arabic. They both mean “Oasis of Peace.” For more than twenty-five years, Jewish and Palestinian citizens of Israel have lived and worked together as equals in Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam, the “Oasis of Peace.” Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam is located in Israel, 30 minutes from both Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. Today, 54 families—half Jewish and half Palestinian—live, work and raise their children together in this unique community. More than 300 families are on a waiting list to move to this community. The community has a democratically elected village government that includes a Mayor and City Council.

Why is the community so significant?

In Israel, there are few opportunities for Jews and Palestinians to meet one another and listen to each other’s views. In the West Bank and Gaza, it is even more rare that Palestinians and Jews will meet on another (except at checkpoints or through military/conflict-related experiences/interactions). The community of Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam is unique in this way. In this village, Jewish and Palestinian families choose to live as neighbors engaging in open dialogue and discussions that address the difficult issues surrounding the conflict. The residents of Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam demonstrate that peace can be achieved through a commitment to equality, mutual respect, trust and dialogue.

How does the community spread its message of peace and dialogue?

Residents of Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam seek to share their method of conflict management and dialogue beyond the village through its educational programs. The bilingual, bicultural Primary School/Junior High School and the School for Peace, a conflict management educational program, both have reached thousands of Palestinians and Jews throughout Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

The Primary School/Junior High School

The Primary School/Junior High School of Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam strives to provide an alternative educational experience for both Palestinian and Jewish citizens of Israel. The Primary School was the first bilingual, bicultural school in Israel. Now two other bilingual primary schools exist; the “Oasis of Peace” school remains a leader in bilingual, bicultural education and is the only school in Israel to provide this opportunity to students at the junior high school level. Students spend their days in mixed Jewish-Palestinian classes with two teachers, one Jewish-Israeli and one Palestinian-Israeli. Classes are led in both Hebrew and Arabic, and the children learn about each other’s cultures, traditions, and holidays.

Most children and youth in Israel attend separate schools. Jewish students attend Jewish schools (throughout childhood—kindergarten through high school) and Palestinian students attend Arab schools. This separation perpetuates the stereotypes and

misunderstandings that each side has of the other. In addition, the level of funding and the educational standards at the schools vary significantly. Jewish schools typically receive a greater amount of funding, allowing for more extracurricular activities, smaller classroom sizes, newer textbooks and other such benefits that the Arab schools in Israel do not have because of their lack of adequate funding.

The School for Peace

The School for Peace brings together Israelis and Palestinians for intensive workshops in which they meet one another (often for the first time) and discuss some of the most difficult issues of the conflict—land, language, rights, etc. These workshops are led by two facilitators, one Jewish and one Palestinian, and are guided dialogues that help participants begin to understand the role of identity in the conflict and their own existing stereotypes and biases.

One of the key programs at the School for Peace targets high school students. Since there is currently no high school in Israel that is binational, all high school aged students attend separate schools (Jewish students attending Jewish schools and Palestinian students attending Arab schools). Jewish and Palestinian teenagers either never or rarely meet one another. The Youth Encounter Workshops at the School for Peace bring together sixty 11th graders (half Jewish and half Palestinian) at Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam for three days of intense discussions and meetings.

Activity – Introduction to the “Oasis of Peace”

Materials: 28 minute video about the “Oasis of Peace” (provided by American Friends of Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam), Questionnaire (provided herein).

Instructions: Distribute questionnaire and ask students to listen for the answers while viewing the video and write them down. If you prefer, you can have students share information with one another after the video ends. Also, students could also be given the “Oasis of Peace” brochure to read and further inform their answers to the questionnaire.

When the video is over, have students say “Oasis of Peace” in both Arabic (Wahat al-Salam) and Hebrew (Neve Shalom) and ask them to use these languages when referring to the “Oasis of Peace.” Review the answers to the questions and then discuss their thoughts and insights about this community.

Related Background Materials and Readings

Students can learn more through the American Friends website, www.oasisofpeace.org, and the village’s website, www.nswas.com.

OASIS OF PEACE VIDEO

Write down your answers to the following questions while viewing the video, Oasis of Peace, (Neve Shalom-Wahat al-Salam.)

1. What is Neve Shalom-Wahat al-Salam?

2. Where is Neve Shalom-Wahat al-Salam?

3. Who lives at Neve Shalom-Wahat al-Salam?

4. Why was Neve Shalom-Wahat al-Salam founded?

5. Who founded Neve Shalom-Wahat al-Salam?

6. When was Neve Shalom-Wahat al-Salam founded?

Write down any questions you have about Neve Shalom-Wahat al-Salam:

PART II: EXPLORING STEREOTYPES AND BIAS

A stereotype is a simplified view of an individual or a group of people, often based on incomplete information or on certain characteristic qualities of that person or group. Stereotypes can be negative, neutral, or positive, but stereotypes are most often used in a negative ways and are often viewed as undesirable because they can lead to misinformation, prejudice and discrimination.

Through familiarity and knowledge and education, stereotypes can be questioned and overcome. Breaking down stereotypes and understanding the way that these generalizations and labels impact perception and belief systems is an important component to increasing understanding, improving relations between various groups and minimizing conflict.

Bias often grows out of stereotyping and other misconceptions. A bias is a preconceived notion or prejudice that impacts a person's point of view or ideology. For example, a bias could lead a person to accept or not accept the truth of a statement or fact not because of the actual proof or evidence, but because of the way that statement's relationship to the person's preconceived notion, or bias, about the statement.

Bias is often classified in different ways. For instance, people often refer to various types of bias: ethnic or racial bias (i.e. racism, nationalism), corporate bias (giving preference to a viewpoint that favors business or corporate interests), class bias (favoring one social or economic class over another), political bias (giving preferences to opinions that support or dispute a particularly political party), religious bias (favoring one religion over another), etc.

Activity I: Knowing Your Own Stereotypes and Biases

Instructions: Ask students to take out a piece of paper and create two columns. At the top of the left-hand column have them write "Palestinian". At the top of the right-hand column have them write "Israeli"(meaning Israeli Jew.)

Explain to students that they will be studying a topic that could bring up deep feelings and emotions, a controversial topic. Express the importance of beginning this series of lessons with an exercise that will help the students to understand at a deep level where they are each coming from as individuals. (If you participate openly and honestly yourself it will encourage the students to also be open and fully aware of their biases.)

Lead the students through the activity - "Close your eyes and relax. I will count while you take 10 deep breaths. Then I will say a word. Certain thoughts, pictures, & feelings about that word will begin to come to you. When I say "Open your eyes," please write your responses down as quickly as possible without thinking about them."

Begin with "Palestinian," then "Israeli."

When exercise is completed, have students share their responses.

This exercise can also be done verbally, involving the entire class in sharing their answers and compiling one list (with everyone's answers) on the board in the classroom.

Expanding the Lesson

Given what the students have discussed regarding stereotypes of Palestinians and Israelis and what they have learned about the "Oasis of Peace," have students select one of the following to write an essay about:

1. How would living in the same neighborhood as someone impact/change your perception of them? Would this impact your ability to stereotype them?
2. Write about a time in your life when you have gotten to know someone personally and this has changed your perception of them and made you not stereotype them?
3. If you have ever been categorized or stereotyped, explain how that made you feel and how you reacted to it.

MEDIA BIAS

Media bias is used to describe a perceived or actual bias (or preconceived notion or prejudice) of a journalist or news source. Typically, the term is used to refer to journalism as a whole, rather than a particular individual journalist. There is a widespread belief that all media sources are biased to some extent or the other, but that the degree and severity and impact of such bias varies from publication to publication and country to country.

The reason for this widespread belief is that many practical limitations exist that make neutrality in the media quite challenging, including the impossibility of reporting every single fact or story that is available (or even to find every single fact or story available). Additionally, there are often other factors that can influence media publications and media representatives. These other factors may include: government influence (most countries have some level of censorship either in law or in practice), business or market influences (the ownership of a news source can impact its reports), and political influences (affiliations with certain political parties or viewpoints may impact reports).

In addition, most journalists are often given a very limited amount of space or airtime to report on a particular subject or story. Thus, editing of a story can mean that certain pieces of information have to be cut, or removed, from the story (this may be done by the report or writer themselves or by someone else at the media outlet).

Finally, another very important factor impacting the media is audience. Most media sources are created for a specific audience; therefore stories must be selected on the basis of their relevance and/or importance to that specific audience. For instance, a local newspaper might give more attention to community events and city council meetings, giving less attention to international and national events that may also be quite significant.

Activity II: IDENTIFYING BIAS IN THE MEDIA

Materials: Worksheet of twenty quotations and their possible source.

Instructions: Ask the students to complete the worksheet without any additional information, simply having them mark the sources of each quote as Jewish, Palestinian or neutral, based solely on the quote itself.

Once the students have gone through the worksheet and marked which source they think each comes from, Jewish citizen of Israel, Palestinian or neutral, you can tell them that all of the quotes come from either the “The Jerusalem Post,” a weekly Israeli newspaper published in English, which tends to be supportive of the Israeli government, or “The Jerusalem Times,” a Palestinian paper, also published weekly, that tends to be supportive of the Palestinian National Authority. Also inform them that all quotes come from a one-month period of relative calm in the 1990s.

For each quote, ask the students who voted for Jewish, Palestinian or neutral (by a show of hands), then inform the students of the actual origin of each quote.

Ask the students to bear in mind that while the statements may genuinely reflect the views of the person stating them, they have also been through various stages of editing and adjustment, including the writers of the article and editors of the paper in which they were originally published and the removal from their original context for this activity.

Have the students discuss the following questions (questions can be discussed in one large group or in small groups, with the possibility of each group addressing one question):

1. What impact has/does editing have on the original message of the person represented in the paper, if any?
2. To what extent, if any, do newspapers highlight views that confirm their own opinions or the opinions of their primary audience? What impact might this have?
3. What do your interpretations of the quotations and their origins tell you about your own views?
4. Should newspapers only report 'facts?' Do they do this? Is this feasible/possible?

Expanding the Lesson

Ask students to go home and look through a newspaper/magazine or to find a news source online. Have them select an article (preferably not an editorial) about an issue that is considered controversial (not necessarily about the Middle East or the conflict).

Using the article they select, have the students do one of the following:

1. Rewrite the article as a reporter with a different viewpoint on the issue than the present article has.
2. Write an essay on the presence or absence of bias in the article. Have the student decide if the article contains bias or not and defend their assertion.

When students turn in their essays, ask for volunteers to share their article with the class, explaining the way(s) in which they think media bias may have (or have not) impacted the content of the article.

Use this activity to continue discussion about the questions raised from the quotation worksheet. Encourage students to connect the lesson that examined their own stereotypes and biases with the existence of bias in the media.

NEWS QUOTES WORKSHEET

For each quote, please mark if you think was made by a Jewish citizen of Israel, a Palestinian or by a neutral party.

1. "We must rethink our common past if we want to have a future, and it is time to honestly state that we are fated to have a common, not a separate, future."

_____ Jewish _____ Palestinian _____ Neutral

2. "Palestinians are determined to declare sovereignty on their territory at any price."

_____ Jewish _____ Palestinian _____ Neutral

3. "Jews should be able to live anywhere in the city and so should Arabs."

_____ Jewish _____ Palestinian _____ Neutral

4. "Many of those settlers I met expressed readiness to sell their premises as part of a political settlement."

_____ Jewish _____ Palestinian _____ Neutral

5. "We reached the conclusion that we must prove to the Palestinian public and the religious public in Israel that we can achieve peace based on our religious principles and sources."

_____ Jewish _____ Palestinian _____ Neutral

6. "We will continue our struggle and resistance until we uproot the occupation from our land."

_____ Jewish _____ Palestinian _____ Neutral

7. "Peace will not be achieved without occupied Jerusalem being returned to its legitimate owner as the capital of an independent Palestine."

_____ Jewish _____ Palestinian _____ Neutral

8. "It is Eretz Israel and you don't give up on Eretz Israel."

_____ Jewish _____ Palestinian _____ Neutral

9. "In Israel-Palestine this small region has undergone at least seven significant boundary changes since 1900."

_____ Jewish _____ Palestinian _____ Neutral

10. "(It) does not recommend forced transfer but merely the migration of Arabs as part of a political agreement."

_____ Jewish _____ Palestinian _____ Neutral

11. "Palestinians have been and continue to be the primary sources of terrorism."

_____ Jewish _____ Palestinian _____ Neutral

12. "More than one in ten workers in Israel is a non-Israeli – a foreigner or Palestinian."

_____ Jewish _____ Palestinian _____ Neutral

13. "The extremists from both sides serve each other."

_____ Jewish _____ Palestinian _____ Neutral

14. "Palestinians have gone beyond ignoring their commitments to brazenly pledging never to fulfill them."

_____ Jewish _____ Palestinian _____ Neutral

15. "As we recall, the Palestinians were sitting in their country peacefully until immigrant Jews from Europe starting pouring into Palestine and plotted to take over the land and kick out its inhabitants."

_____ Jewish _____ Palestinian _____ Neutral

16. "For every rock thrown at a Palestinian here, the Jews have been hit by 10,000 rocks."

_____ Jewish _____ Palestinian _____ Neutral

17. "Every time a Jew kills Arabs, the Israeli authorities end up punishing the victims."

_____ Jewish _____ Palestinian _____ Neutral

18. "There can be no hope for the Arab nation except in unity and a common front against those who are crucifying the Palestinian people as they had crucified Our Lord Jesus Christ 2000 years ago."

_____ Jewish _____ Palestinian _____ Neutral

19. "Arafat is not a neo-Nazi. He's a Nazi, pure and simple."

_____ Jewish _____ Palestinian _____ Neutral

20. "If more blood is shed on our account, then our deaths will indeed be in vain. If our deaths promote the sort of soul-searching that leads to a rejection of armed conflict characteristic of this occupation then our deaths will indeed have redemptive value."

_____ Jewish _____ Palestinian _____ Neutral

NEWS QUOTES – ANSWER KEY

For each quote, please mark if you think was made by a Jewish citizen of Israel, a Palestinian or by a neutral party.

1. “We must rethink our common past if we want to have a future, and it is time to honestly state that we are fated to have a common, not a separate, future.”

_____ Jewish X **Palestinian** _____ Neutral

This is a statement from The Jerusalem Times quoting the late Edward Said, a leading Palestinian-American writer.

2. “Palestinians are determined to declare sovereignty on their territory at any price.”

_____ Jewish X **Palestinian** _____ Neutral

This is from an editorial in The Jerusalem Times.

3. “Jews should be able to live anywhere in the city and so should Arabs.”

 X **Jewish** _____ Palestinian _____ Neutral

This is a statement from The Jerusalem Post quoting Ehud Olmert, who was the Mayor of Jerusalem at the time. He was responding to a fire bomb attack on an apartment in West Jerusalem where three Palestinian women lived.

4. “Many of those settlers I met expressed readiness to sell their premises as part of a political settlement.”

_____ Jewish X **Palestinian** _____ Neutral

This is a statement from The Jerusalem Times quoting Hani al-Hassan, a political advisor to Arafat.

5. “We reached the conclusion that we must prove to the Palestinian public and the religious public in Israel that we can achieve peace based on our religious principles and sources.”

 X **Jewish** _____ Palestinian _____ Neutral

This is a statement from The Jerusalem Post, quoting Ranit Budaie, a member of an Israeli religious peace group, Netivot Shalom.

6. “We will continue our struggle and resistance until we uproot the occupation from our land.”

Jewish **Palestinian** Neutral

This statement ran in the Jewish paper, The Jerusalem Post that was citing Dr. Abdul Aziz Rantisi, a Hamas leader in the Gaza Strip.

7. “Peace will not be achieved without occupied Jerusalem being returned to its legitimate owner as the capital of an independent Palestine.”

Jewish **Palestinian** Neutral

This statement ran in the Jewish paper, The Jerusalem Post. The paper was quoting a letter written by Yasser Arafat.

8. “It is Eretz Israel and you don’t give up on Eretz Israel.”

Jewish Palestinian Neutral

This statement was in The Jerusalem Post, quoting an Israeli settler living in the West Bank.

9. “In Israel-Palestine this small region has undergone at least seven significant boundary changes since 1900.”

Jewish Palestinian Neutral

This statement ran in the Jewish paper, The Jerusalem Post, quoting a professor at Ben Gurion University in Israel.

10. “(It) does not recommend forced transfer but merely the migration of Arabs as part of a political agreement.”

Jewish Palestinian Neutral

This statement was in The Jerusalem Post, quoting Shlomo Gazit, who headed Israeli army intelligence. He is describing the policy of a political party in Israel that is considered at the far right of the political spectrum.

11. “Palestinians have been and continue to be the primary sources of terrorism.”

Jewish Palestinian Neutral

This statement ran in the Jewish paper, The Jerusalem Post, quoting a professor at Bar Ilan University in Israel.

12. “More than one in ten workers in Israel is a non-Israeli – a foreigner or Palestinian.”

Jewish Palestinian Neutral

This statement is from The Jerusalem Post in a news article on the capture of illegal workers in Israel.

13. “The extremists from both sides serve each other.”

Jewish **Palestinian** Neutral

This statement is from The Jerusalem Times, quoting Arafat as he refers to the Israeli leadership and, indirectly, to his own opponents.

14. “Palestinians have gone beyond ignoring their commitments to brazenly pledging never to fulfill them.”

Jewish Palestinian Neutral

This is from an editorial in The Jerusalem Post.

15. “As we recall, the Palestinians were sitting in their country peacefully until immigrant Jews from Europe starting pouring into Palestine and plotted to take over the land and kick out its inhabitants.”

Jewish **Palestinian** Neutral

This is from an editorial in The Jerusalem Times.

16. “For every rock thrown at a Palestinian here, the Jews have been hit by 10,000 rocks.”

Jewish Palestinian Neutral

This statement is from The Jerusalem Post, citing a statement made by an Israeli settler in Hebron.

17. “Every time a Jew kills Arabs, the Israeli authorities end up punishing the victims.”

_____ Jewish **X** **Palestinian** _____ Neutral

This statement is from The Jerusalem Times, citing a statement made by a Palestinian resident of Hebron.

18. “There can be no hope for the Arab nation except in unity and a common front against those who are crucifying the Palestinian people as they had crucified Our Lord Jesus Christ 2000 years ago.”

_____ Jewish **X** **Palestinian** _____ Neutral

This statement is from The Jerusalem Times, quoting a Palestinian Christian.

19. “Arafat is not a neo-Nazi. He’s a Nazi, purse and simple.”

 X **Jewish** _____ Palestinian _____ Neutral

This statement is from The Jerusalem Post, citing a leader of one of the extreme right-wing political parties in Israel during a debate on whether Arafat should have been allowed to visit the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C.

20. “If more blood is shed on our account, then our deaths will indeed be in vain. If our deaths promote the sort of soul-searching that leads to a rejection of armed conflict characteristic of this occupation then our deaths will indeed have redemptive value.”

_____ Jewish **X** **Palestinian** **X** **Neutral**

This statement ran in The Jerusalem Times, but it was a statement issued by members of the Christian Peacemakers Team, an international peace organization, while they were in Hebron after they received death threats from Israeli extremists.

PART III: EXPLORING & UNDERSTANDING IDENTITY

Identity, as a term and a way of understanding people and their behavior, has become increasingly popular in society (teachers, academics, researchers, politicians, journalists, etc. all reference “identity” in explaining people and their behavior). Identity is increasingly viewed as an absolute - everyone must have an identity. When viewed in this way, it leads to a belief that a person’s identity is rigid and cannot be changed, but it is important to understand that a person’s identity is something that is constructed, not something that people are born with. In fact, identity is not rigid at all. It can change often and may even vary according to point of view. For instance, a person may explain their own identity in a way that is quite different from how an outside might define their identity. Or a person may have many identities at once. For instance, an individual may have an ethnic identity that is coupled with a strong sense of pride in their culture, while also having a sense of identity related to another group, like a subculture (hip-hop, punk, etc.)

Psychologists typically understand identity in terms of a person’s ability to be self-reflective, to be aware of themselves, connecting identity to self-image, but a more common use of identity is the type of identity that the social sciences use: social identity or an individual’s labeling of themselves as a member of a particular group. These groups are often related to nationality, social class, ethnicity, religion, gender, employment, a subculture, etc. These group identities may be sources of pride and comfort for individuals, creating a sense of community. At times, though, these group identities may lead a person to behave in certain way because they believe this behavior makes them a part of a group, though it is not a behavior that they feel comfortable with.

A strong sense of identity, in psychological terms, meaning a strong sense of self is considered very important for a person’s understanding of themselves and of others. This type of confidence and awareness is necessary for a person to comfortably interact with people that are different from his or herself (or belong to a different group identity). Instead of feeling threatened by the person’s difference, a self-aware person (or person with a strong sense of their own identity) will be able to interact with understanding and openness, rather than fear. At the same time, group identities may often have negative consequences. For instance, if a person does not have a strong sense of identity, they may exaggerate their group identity as they seek a sense of belonging. This may lead them to act in hurtful ways toward members of a different group. In this way, a identity can be positive or negative, depending on a person’s understanding and awareness of it.

Activity I: Understanding Identity – Who Are You?

Materials: Identity Sheet

Instructions: Ask students to fill in the Identity Sheet, assure them that their answers will be completely confidential. Also provide students with an additional identity sheet to fill out about you, the teacher.

After students have filled in the form, lead a discussion (as a class or in small groups) about the complexity of identities and then different aspects of identity that exist. You can also ask students to write about the questions if they are hesitant to share out loud.

Questions to stimulate discussion may include:

1. What might clothing/dress signify or say about a person?
2. What could tattoos or jewelry signify or say about a person?
3. What impact do groups (band, sports team, drama club) have on a person's identity? What impact does group involvement have on yourself and on the way others view you?
4. What role does identity play at school? What role do group affiliations and/or "cliques" play at school? What is the difference between the two, if any?
5. Does your perception of yourself differ from the perception you think others have of you? Explain.
6. Discuss the many ways a person can be described and the various identities people can have?

IDENTITY AND THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

The "Oasis of Peace" and the School for Peace view the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a conflict between two conflicting national *identities*, rather than between individuals or groups of individuals. Since the end of World War II, modern society has become increasingly arranged according to nation-states and thus national identities. A group's collective identity often now grows out of the nation to which that group belongs. With the end of colonialism and the collapse of the Soviet Union, many new countries have come into existence. At the same time, many groups with collective identities have begun calling for sovereignty and vocalizing their existence as national groups.

Both Israelis and Palestinians have been involved in this recent process of national identity formation and the community of Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam and its key educational institutions, the School for Peace and Primary School/Junior High School, consider the conflict to be between these two national identities.

Thus, the community and its educational programs, seek to address the conflict and engage in problem-solving efforts and methods that take into account the role of identity. Rather than ask Palestinian and Jewish students (at the two schools) to set aside their differences and find their commonalities and forge a new identity, the schools and community actually work to foster a positive sense of each individual's own personal and group identity in a way that allows them to feel safe and secure. By establishing a secure identity and connection with each person's own understanding of themselves, the community believes that Palestinians and Jews can interact more comfortably and let go

of their fears and insecurities. A secure identity is important to understanding another person's ideas, perceptions and identity.

If both Palestinians and Jews have stable, positive national identities, they will be able to respect the other person's national identity and engage in discussions that foster understanding. The community of Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam demonstrates that two national identities can live peacefully in the same village and work together. Different identities do not have to lead to clashes and conflict, they can actually lead to improved understanding, cooperation and compromise.

At the School for Peace, Palestinian and Jewish youth begin to understand this unique role that identity can play. Through understanding this, they can begin to explore their own personal identities, cultural identities and national identities. As they become aware of the impact these various identities have on their own actions and decisions, particularly in terms of the other group, they can change those decisions and actions. Participants learn that their identities can be strong and important to them without being sources of negativity against another. For instance, when a Jewish student begins to understand how important their national identity is to them, they can start to understand that national identity would also be important for a Palestinian student. In this way, barriers start to break down and productive discussions can begin.

Activity II: The Role of Identity in Relation to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

Materials: Profiles of four youth—2 Palestinian-Israelis and 2 Jewish-Israelis—who participated in a School for Peace Youth Encounter Workshop.

Instructions: Ask students to read the four profiles. Next, ask them to read the profiles again. This time have them underline things the youth say that are expressions of the person's identity. Now, have the students read the profiles a third time. This time ask them to underline, in a different color, things the youth say that demonstrate stereotypes they hold about the other or about their own group.

Break students into small groups (four in each group).

1. Have students discuss the ways in which they see, from the profiles, the various youth's identities and stereotypes impacting their perceptions of one another.
2. Ask students to explore and hypothesize on ways in which they think that identities and stereotypes could impact the youth's feelings about the conflict and the possibilities for peace.
3. Ask the students to hypothesize about how they think each youth would behave if they were talking with one of the other youths. Now have each member of the group select a different youth to "act out" and have the youth engage in a role-play.

4. After the role-play ask each group to report on what happened. Was there tension? How were the various youth's identities portrayed during the discussion?

Expanding the Lesson

Have students write an essay or do journal writing that considers the similarities and differences between "identity" and "stereotypes." Encourage students to consider this question – Can identity be a positive way to define and describe a person? Why or How?

Related Background Materials and Readings

Have students read the testimonials of School for Peace workshops participants after the completion of a Youth Encounter Workshop. These testimonials demonstrate the ways in which the youth have learned to understand their own identities and to understand the other side.

IDENTITY SHEET

Fill in the blanks as honestly as possible (no one else will see this sheet).

My name is _____

I live in _____ (city, state, country)

I was born in _____ (city, state, country)

On my passport it says I am a citizen of _____ (country)

I would call myself _____ (nationality)

On a census form, I would identify myself as _____ (race or ethnicity)

Others would probably identify me as _____ (race or ethnicity)

Circle all of the following labels that apply to you:

Male/Female

Son/Daughter

Grandson/Granddaughter

Brother/Sister

Aunt/Uncle

Fill in some other labels that might apply to you _____

My faith is _____ or I do not have a religious faith.

I like to proclaim my faith/religious identity by wearing _____

I like to wear jewelry: earrings/nose-ring/belly-button ring/bracelets/rings/necklace or _____

I have/do not have tattoos. I like to wear my hair _____

I wear a uniform for _____ because _____

When my parents/guardians look at me they think I am _____

because _____

When my teacher looks at me he/she thinks I am _____

because _____

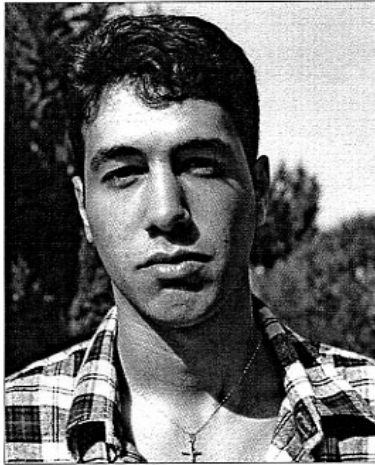
When my friends look at me they think I am _____

because _____

When I look at myself I think I am _____

because _____

ELIAS



Extreme fanatic groups from both sides don't want peace, and they try to destroy the peace process. We as Christians are in the middle, just watching. We feel that our decisions, our concerns are not important to the government. Up till now Israel is a state for Jews. If we had all our rights as Israeli citizens, and peace with all the Arab neighbours then I could serve in the Israeli army and I would feel that Israel is my country too.

How do you define your rights?

I want to have equal rights to those of the Jewish citizens. We get 50% or less of the money they get for schools and hospitals. We have no youth clubs like the Jewish young people have. No new towns are built for Palestinians. They surround our towns with Jewish settlements, on land

which is ours. Another example is that as Arabs we cannot be in the army. Employers say, "You didn't serve in the army." They use the army as a form of discrimination to prevent us getting good jobs.

We feel that they don't trust us completely. I was walking in the Mall. There was a security guard at the entrance. A religious Jew in black came past him with a gun in his belt. He walked in like a hero. But me and my friend he searched. They are suspicious of us and when there is a bombing they are even more frightened of us. No Israeli Palestinian would commit such a terrible crime or agree with such an action, but they think that when there is a bombing we are happy and glad for the death of Jewish people. But we are as sad as they are.

Another issue we argued about was the Right of Return. Any Jew can come to Israel but Palestinian refugees have no right to return to their former homes. The Jews are frightened that we might become the majority and they think that if we are in the majority we might attack them and kill them.

How would you sum up your feelings about the encounter?

It was a good experience. The problem is not getting along together when we discuss politics. I was frustrated when I couldn't convince them of everything I believe in, but I hope that in the future I will be more successful and go further in influencing them. I will always support meetings like this. Despite all the difference of opinions and all the disagreements, we have made friends and have agreed to phone and to write to each other. This kind of activity gives us the best chance of living together in harmony.

GALI



Every year a group of about 50 teenagers from my year at school comes here to NSWaS for an encounter group. I came not because I wanted to meet Arabs, but because my five close friends wanted to come and I wanted to be with them; and also I thought it would be interesting. My parents hadn't heard about it before, but when I described what we would be doing they thought it would be very interesting and they were very keen.

I live about 25 miles from NSWaS but I didn't know of it until we heard about it at school. I will go back and tell my friends they really missed something because it's fun and it's very important. Now I know what it's like, I would really have regretted it if I hadn't come.

Do you mix mostly with people who share your point of view?

My friends have all sorts of different attitudes and ideas about the future for Israel. My boyfriend is 16 and he is at another school. He is very right wing and so are his parents. We don't discuss politics very much. When we do, I talk and he doesn't!

How do you feel about the issues that are being raised in the workshop?

I feel very guilty and I feel they are right and we don't treat them as we should. I believe they should have the same rights as Jewish Israelis. I understand that Arabs and Jews want the same, believe the same. We both believe: We were here first. We don't have another country. All our people should have the right to be here. We want to live in peace, side by side.

We spoke about the things that make us frightened or angry. We told the Arabs how terrified we are by the terrorist bombings, and how every day soldiers are killed in Lebanon protecting Israeli citizens living near the border. Many Jewish Israelis don't understand that there are Israeli Arabs, and Arabs from the occupied territories, and that the Hamas come from the occupied territories. (*Does your boyfriend make a distinction between Israeli and Palestinian Arabs?* I don't know; I can't talk about it with him.) We heard that every time there is a bomb the Israeli Arabs are very scared because they are just as much at risk. We understand how they feel. They are surprised that we agree with them.

The Arabs told us that the Jews take their land for settlements. We didn't know what to say about that. We are the majority and because we are in power we control them, and whatever they want to do they have to get our permission. There are many problems that have to be solved, but they should have more trust in us and we should have much more trust in them. More encounters like this would bring more trust and more understanding.

HNAN



I live in a small town near Nazareth and already have a few Jewish friends. I met them in summer camp. And I see Jewish people in Haifa and other places and talk to them and make friends. I love Jewish people who mean well towards us, who know that we also mean well towards them and who can see that we are human beings like themselves.

But I know that there are also Jews who think all Arabs are from Hamas and that we all want to kill them. I want to meet these people who have such wrong ideas about us, but they don't want to meet us. There are also Arabic people who are prejudiced like that. The Hamas are like those extreme Jews.

My father works for Egged and has a lot of Jewish friends and they are very nice to him. My grandmother lives among Jewish people and they love her a lot. She is kind hearted and loves everyone, and that is why they love her.

In general we have a good time here in Israel. Maybe we don't have so much as the Jewish citizens. For instance, it is difficult sometimes to get certain jobs because employers say, "You weren't in the army so you can't do this job." And there are some subjects we cannot study at university for the same reason. Facilities in Arabic schools are not as good as those in Jewish schools. They have swimming pools for instance and our schools do not. Arabic schools are not given as much funding, but nevertheless I am very proud that we succeed anyway and go to university. In the end we can reach the same standards as Jewish Israelis.

I was very eager to find out how this meeting with the Jewish students would work out. We became friends in such a short time! Now I know that they don't hate us and I am so happy that I already have friends here. I am so surprised to find that their ideas are so similar to ours. When we tell them about something we want, and how we would like to change things, they say, "Yes, that's true."

IDO



My family is Ashkenazi, that is Jews who have come to Israel from Europe. My family have been in Israel for three generations. All my family are members of the Israeli Labour Party. This doesn't mean that we are always in agreement about politics. For example, once we had a family discussion about Har Homa, (Jewish settlements being built in Arab East Jerusalem) and we all agreed that the Israelis should not be building there. But when I said that I do not have a problem with the Palestinians having East Jerusalem as their capital it caused a very heated argument with a lot of shouting.

In my class at school there are supporters of all the different parties. We range from members of Peace Now, like myself to the most extreme right wing like Moledet and Kahane. You can imagine that, because we have such different and such strongly held opinions, when we have an incident such as a bombing, it leads to very fierce discussion and much anger between people of different opinions. Sometimes people even start fighting. At such times it's very dangerous to express any sympathy for the situation of the Arab people – I mean ordinary Arabs, not members of Hamas or Hizbullah. People scream at you, "People have been bombed into little pieces. They had to collect the parts of their bodies to bury them – and you can say things like that!"

The big mistake of the Israeli government is to allow poverty and hunger in the Palestinian territories, because poverty and religious fundamentalism is a sure recipe for violence. With poverty, religious people turn to fundamentalism. The care the Israeli Government does not give the Palestinians, they get instead from extremist religious groups like Hamas. Social workers from Hamas give them care and then they say, "Fight for your country." These extremist groups manage to convince people that killing for a 'righteous cause' is sacred.

It's upsetting to think of how the Palestinians are living at the moment and how they are suffering. I have been in Gaza and have seen for myself how poor they are. The government needs to decide how it can help them achieve a better life for themselves whilst not risking Israel's security.

The important thing is the peace process. For the peace process to succeed it is important that people have hope. Unless people believe that peace can happen – it can't. Rabin (former Prime Minister) once said, "Peace may be a risk – but it is better than the certainty of war." We have to keep hoping and take that risk.

PART IV: EXPLORING & RESOLVING CONFLICT

Activity I: Learning About Conflict Through a Personal Experience

Materials: No special materials are needed.

Instructions: Ask students to write a brief description (no more than one short paragraph) of a problem or conflict they have experienced themselves, either at school or at home, which could be discussed in small groups and then by the whole class. Encourage students to think of issues related to identity, stereotypes, misunderstandings, differences, etc., which can be informed by the other lessons. Stress the importance of respect and open dialogue (explain to them that if a community living within a conflict region can respect one another and engage in open dialogue, surely within a classroom setting the group can achieve this).

The authorship of the problems raised should not be revealed, so students know that their problem will not be connected to them. Collect the descriptions.

Pair the students up and hand each pair one description. Ask them to list the possible causes for the problem that is raised. Ask them to list possible solutions to address these problems.

After ten or fifteen minutes, have each group of two join another group to create groups of four. Have the four of them discuss the problems and add to the list of causes and solutions.

After ten or fifteen minutes, ask each group to choose one problem for the whole group to discuss.

Expanding the Lesson

Have students list the ways in which identity and/or stereotypes influenced the problem. Then have them list the ways in which self-confidence about identity and the undoing of stereotypes could play a role in solving the problem.