



Building PEACE through Personal Experience

To: *Mr. Stevie Wonder*

FROM: *Members of Interfaith Peace-Builders' (IFPB) African Heritage Delegations to Palestine/Israel, the 2012 Dorothy Cotton Institute Civil & Human Rights Delegation, other African American IFPB delegates, and allies*

From the South, to South Africa, to Israel, "It's Wrong (Apartheid)" A Thank You Letter from Black America to Stevie Wonder

Dear Mr. Wonder:

We, members of Interfaith Peace Builders' (IFPB) 2011 and 2012 African Heritage Delegations, the 2012 Dorothy Cotton Institute Civil & Human Rights Delegation, other IFPB delegates of African heritage, and allies, **thank you for canceling your performance at the Israeli Defense Forces' fundraiser planned for December 6, 2012 in Los Angeles.**

We are African Americans who traveled to Palestine/Israel to meet with people working for peace and justice. We represent the rich diversity of Black America. We are multi-generational and interfaith; activists, community organizers, and scholars; youth, elders, parents, and everyday people. We yearn for peace, love, prosperity, and respect for all humanity.

Like you, Brother Stevie, we are deeply concerned about the livelihood of our brothers and sisters in Palestine/Israel (Jewish, Arab, African, and others). We understand love and inclusion to be the foundation of strategies towards peace. Nowhere is this more important than in the "Holy Land". That is why we are grateful to learn you have withdrawn your offer to perform at the fundraiser for the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF). We firmly support your decision.

As African Americans, we visited Palestine/Israel and witnessed firsthand the devastating impact of occupation, injustice and crimes against humanity heaped upon the Palestinians by the IDF. We traveled from military checkpoint to military checkpoint and witnessed armed soldiers of the IDF check papers and harass Palestinian civilians; we witnessed Israeli-only settlements and roads; we spoke with Israeli settlers who had forced Palestinians out of their homes; and we witnessed the daily humiliations of Palestinian men, women and children.

Some of us grew up in the Jim Crow South. The parallels between what we lived and what we witnessed in Palestine/Israel were uncomfortably reminiscent of our own experiences.

Some of us participated in the movement against Apartheid in South Africa and quickly made the same connections as Archbishop Desmond Tutu. In his essay, "Apartheid in the Holy Land," Archbishop Tutu

explains: "I've been very deeply distressed in my visit to the Holy Land; it reminded me so much of what happened to us black people in South Africa. I have seen the humiliation of the Palestinians at checkpoints and roadblocks, suffering like us when young white police officers prevented us from moving about."

In 1985 you released the groundbreaking album, "In a Square Circle." On the closing song on that album, *It's Wrong (Apartheid)*, you sing:

*You know Apartheid's wrong, wrong
Like slavery was wrong, wrong
Like the holocaust was wrong, wrong
Apartheid is wrong, wrong, wrong...
The pain you cause in God's name
Points only to yourself to blame
For the negative karma you will be receiving
'cause when people are oppressed
With atrocities that test
The future of all mankind we, the world won't stand seeing*

We agree with every one of those words. **We commend you for joining in the movement that ultimately helped topple the Apartheid regime in South Africa. We invite you to stand with us against all manifestations of legalized racial oppression just as vigorously today.**

Thank you, Brother Stevie, for withdrawing your name from the IDF fundraiser. In doing so, we believe you acted bravely in the cause of peace and justice. We ask you to continue your activism holistically; join with allies in Jewish and Arab communities, but do so in order to build and support the movement for human rights and an end to Israel's military occupation and Apartheid.

We ask you to share with the world what you felt during your visit to the Palestinian village of Beit Hanina, near Jerusalem, when you said: "Palestinians and Israelis can be as one."

We ask you, Messenger of Peace, to use your art and activism to promote love and peace in Palestine/Israel, and denounce any means of violence there, including the state-sponsored violence of the Israeli Defense Forces.

We ask you to bring the same passion for peace and justice to the fight against Apartheid in Palestine/Israel as you brought to the struggle against Apartheid in South Africa.

And finally, Brother Stevie, we ask you to join the international movement of [Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions](#) against Israel's illegal military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Join the global community of people committed to supporting the right of the Palestinian people to live as fully recognized equals in their own land.

We conclude our plea with the powerful words of your song, *Black Man*:

*For with justice not for all men, history will repeat again
It's time we learned this world was made for all men*

Thank you,

39 Original signers (Interfaith Peace-Builders' delegates of African heritage):

- Queen Adams, 2011 IFPB African Heritage Delegation
- Rosie Ashamalla, May 2012 IFPB Delegation
- Dr. Martha Banks, 2012 IFPB African Heritage Delegation
- donnie betts, 2012 Civil & Human Rights Delegation
- Rev. Avery Blakeney, 2011 IFPB African Heritage Delegation
- Austin Branion, November 2012 IFPB Delegation
- Dr. Gloria Brown, 2011 IFPB African Heritage Delegation
- Rev. Heber Brown, May 2010 Delegation
- Dr. Clayborne Carson, 2012 Civil & Human Rights Delegation
- Daniel Castillo, 2012 IFPB African Heritage Delegation
- La Mikia Castillo, 2012 IFPB African Heritage Delegation
- Aaron Dixon, 2012 IFPB African Heritage Delegation
- Felicia Eaves, July 2008 IFPB Delegation
- Salmaa Elshanshory, July 2011 IFPB Delegation
- Jesse Hagopian, 2011 IFPB African Heritage Delegation
- Shady Hakim, July 2004 IFPB Delegation
- Keith Harvey, 2011 IFPB African Heritage Delegation
- La Trina Jackson, 2011 IFPB African Heritage Delegation
- Rev. Lucas Johnson, 2012 Civil & Human Rights Delegation
- Darryl Jordan, 2012 IFPB African Heritage Delegation and 2008 People of Color Delegation
- Syrtiller Kabat, November 2010 IFPB Delegation
- Aljosie Knight, 2012 Civil & Human Rights Delegation
- Jennifer Lee, 2012 IFPB African Heritage Delegation
- Rev. Stephanie Lee, 2012 IFPB African Heritage Delegation
- Gerald Lenoir, 2011 IFPB African Heritage Delegation
- Michael Nettles, 2011 IFPB African Heritage Delegation
- Nata Orisma, July 2011 IFPB Delegation
- Yasmeen Peer, July 2010 IFPB Delegation
- Raheemah Raheem, 2011 IFPB African Heritage Delegation
- Rev. Osagyefo Sekou, 2012 Civil & Human Rights Delegation
- Zarinah Shakir, 2007 IFPB Delegation
- Melanie Smith, 2012 IFPB African Heritage Delegation
- Fulani Sunni Ali, 2008 People of Color Delegation
- Aisha Truss, 2012 IFPB African Heritage Delegation
- Dr. James Turner, 2012 Civil & Human Rights Delegation
- Hal Weaver, 2008 People of Color Delegation
- Brandon West, July 2009 IFPB Delegation
- Elandria Williams, 2012 IFPB African Heritage Delegation
- Jamie Witter, 2012 IFPB African Heritage Delegation

An Additional 753 people signed on as “supporters”. For those names see <http://bit.ly/VrmJVM>

For more on the African Heritage Delegation see: www.ifpb.org/africanheritage

Interfaith Peace-Builders believes in the power of eye-witness experience and transformation. Given the opportunity to speak directly with Israelis and Palestinians, delegates return to North America better informed, more energized, and with a deeper understanding of the possibilities for true justice in the Middle East. Begun as a program of the Fellowship of Reconciliation in 2000, **Interfaith Peace-Builders'** mission is to give US citizens the opportunity to see and understand the Israeli-Palestinian conflict firsthand and to empower these citizens to educate their local communities and advocate for better US foreign policy when they return to the US. Learn more at: www.interfaithpeacebuilders.org.