

STORIES TO CHANGE THE WORLD

IFPB Senior Fellow Joe Groves reflects on “the Palestinian Gandhi” and his recent North Carolina speaking tour

Story after story of Palestinian nonviolence. That is what I shared with audiences in North Carolina during my recent visit. These stories, many of which we have heard time again on IFPB delegations, informed the primary topic for my events: *Where is the Palestinian Gandhi?*

One of the three responses I presented is quite simple: “The Palestinian Gandhi is everywhere!”

Understanding this fact opens our minds to stories of the resistance in Bil’in, nonviolence trainings in Bethlehem, actions in Hebron and At-Tuwani, Dauod Nassar’s *Tent of Nations*, the *Palestinian Fair Trade Association*, and of Israeli resisters such as Rami Elhanan and numerous Israeli conscientious objectors.



Joe Groves addresses a large group at the Commonlight Meetingplace in Asheville, North Carolina. During an 8 day tour Joe spoke at a dozen events. Contact IFPB for information on sponsoring a talk in your own community.

These stories can change the world. The statistics of the wall/fence/barrier, settlement growth, and other “facts on the ground” are part of the brutal reality of the occupation. A reality so dismal that it can easily lead to despair. Stories of nonviolence bring alive the alternative reality of resistance to occupation and violence. Such stories challenge the standard discourse on the conflict; they energize; they call us to commitment and action.

One of our primary challenges at Interfaith Peace-Builders is bringing these stories to the forefront of the discussion on Israel/Palestine.

We have the stories – hundreds of them from our 26 delegations and 350 participants. **Now we need the resources to get these stories out broadly - to change the discourse, if not the world!**

VOICES OF THE PEACE-BUILDERS DELEGATION RETURNS

Interfaith Peace-Builders and National Peace Foundation Delegation witnesses pain and hope

IFPB’s 26th delegation returned from Israel/Palestine on April 12. Participants toured the region and met with Israelis and Palestinians working nonviolently for an end to the occupation and a peaceful future for their people. Since their return, delegates have invested themselves in sharing the experience, with their local media and communities. During the delegation, Co-Leader Cathy Sultan filed the report on **page three**.

INTERFAITH PEACE-BUILDERS IS CERTIFIED!

At IFPB, we have always prided ourselves for our independent thinking and innovative programming. For more than seven years, we have run the best delegations to Israel/Palestine available. Recent years have seen a greater investment in building capacity to support delegate activism on return to North America. Our Education and Advocacy Program is our fastest growing program and the most promising in terms of building a movement for lasting peace and justice in Israel/Palestine.

One piece has been missing from all of this, however. Since our formal independence in 2006, IFPB has been fiscally sponsored by our mother organization, the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR). After a prolonged application process, we have obtained our own 501(c)3 not-for-profit corporation certification! Donations to Interfaith Peace-Builders have always been tax-deductible, but starting now, all donations will be marked with our very own tax-ID number.

We want to thank Jerry Elmer and Martha Shanle for their invaluable expertise, and Board members Scott Kennedy and Alta Schwartz for their time and investment in the process.

One more step towards building a bigger and better IFPB is complete. **We are certified!**

STAFF AND BOARD MEET IN WASHINGTON, DC

First in-person meeting sets stage for further growth

After working by phone and email for the first year of its existence, the Interfaith Peace-Builders Board of Directors met in person for the first time from March 7– 9, 2008. This major milestone for IFPB was both productive and fun.

We emerged with clear strategic goals for the next 18 months, including: increasing the size of IFPB delegations; a renewed effort to recruit more delegates, including people of color; organizing two grassroots organizing workshops as part of the expansion of our Education and Advocacy Program; further developing our organizational capacity, staff and Board; and engaging in a sustained fundraising drive to meet our budget needs.

This first in person board meeting was another major step forward for IFPB. Our board is poised to become even more active in the important work of peace-building and education.

As IFPB brings to a close a successful second year of independence, We have moved from our start-up phase to long-term planning and coordinated programming.

We have an expert Board, a committed staff and a vision that prioritizes a nonviolent solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and a peaceful future for the people of the region.



IFPB Board of Directors. From left to right: Scott Kennedy, Ilise Cohen, Joe Groves, Mara Kronenfeld, Mike Daly, Alta Schwartz, Shady Hakim and Michael Brown.

I SEE JOHN LEWIS

Cathy Sultan co-led the Voices of the Peace-Builders delegation. She is a Board member of the National Peace Foundation and the author of three books. During the trip, she filed this report:

Before leaving for the delegation I had the privilege of hearing Representative John Lewis, leader of the Congressional Black Caucus in the US Congress. During a series of events commemorating Martin Luther King, Congressman Lewis was asked how, in the face of the violence and persecution he suffered during the civil rights movement, he was able to practice non-violent resistance. He responded, "For me, non-violence resistance was never a technique I pulled out of my pocket when I needed it. Rather, it is a deeply held belief I have adopted as a way of life."

During our visit to the occupied West Bank I thought often of this incredible man who, despite being imprisoned and beaten to within an inch of his life, decided that hatred was too heavy a burden to carry. Visiting cities in the West Bank under Israeli occupation I see the image of John Lewis everywhere I look. I see him in the Palestinians who are obliged to walk through checkpoints on a daily basis to get to work or school, in those same individuals who are forbidden access to Israeli-only highways, and those who are separated from their family by a Separation Barrier. I see John Lewis in every Palestinian who has been thrown off his land, had his house demolished and his olive trees uprooted to make room for illegal Israeli settlements. I see him, too, in the faces of the Palestinian people who maintain their dignity, their humanity and most importantly their sense of humor in the face of daily humiliations.

When I recently went through the Qalandia checkpoint, at the entrance to Jerusalem from Ramallah, I encountered an angry Israeli soldier. When she demanded my papers in the harshest manner possible and refused to understand that it was the metal in my knees that made the alarm go off, my first instinct was to respond to her crassness by screaming back at her. I quickly realized that those Palestinians around me simply shrugged off such treatment. Outside the checkpoint terminal I asked one woman how she managed to stay so calm. "It is very simple," she replied. "No matter how badly the Israeli soldiers treat us they will never be able to defeat us. Knowing that gives me my strength."

In the face of such challenges I am humbled in the realization that I have much to learn about patience, fortitude and hope if ever I aspire to walk on the path of non-violent resistance with the likes of John Lewis and the Palestinian people both of whom understood long ago that hatred is too heavy a burden to carry.

Read more reports from the Voices of the Peace-Builders delegation at www.ifpbdel.org/del26



Delegates listen as a member of the Israeli Coalition Against Home Demolitions displays a map of Israeli settlements and the Wall built on Palestinian land in Jerusalem (© Mike Daly).

UPCOMING IFPB DELEGATIONS. . . Is it time for you to join?

July 27—August 10, 2008: Investing in Peace: Addressing an Ongoing Occupation

SPACE IS LIMITED – APPLY TODAY! Civil society leaders have increasingly termed Israel's domination of the Palestinian territories as a form of Apartheid. This trip will focus on the structural segregation of space and the physical separation of the two peoples. Led by Felicia Eaves, DC Chair of *Black Voices for Peace* and Steering Committee Member of the *US Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation*, and Jacob Pace, Communications Coordinator at *Interfaith Peace-Builders*.

November 8 – November 22, 2008: Olive Harvest Delegation

This delegation, co-sponsored by the *American Friends Service Committee*, will participate in the Palestinian olive harvest – generally a time of great community activism, where people of all ages and backgrounds join farmers as they harvest. Delegates will hear from Palestinian farmers and learn of the importance of agriculture to the economy and culture.

2009 Delegations (exact dates pending)

March/April 2009, May/June 2009, July/August 2009

Apply today at
www.ifpbdel.org

HELP A LOW-INCOME DELEGATE VISIT ISRAEL/PALESTINE

Donate \$200 or more today and half your donation counts towards IFPB's Scholarship Fund

IFPB's biggest challenge has always been to provide financial help to delegation participants who cannot otherwise afford the cost of delegation fees and travel. In response, we have operated a scholarship fund to provide stipends for low-income delegates.

Since 2001, IFPB has sent over 33 delegates (almost 10% of our total participants) to Palestine/Israel with partial funding. **We have granted over \$25,000 in scholarships and reduced fees!**



However, our scholarship fund is currently desperately low. As interest in our delegations rises among low-income communities and people of color, we face the challenge of providing financial support for those who cannot afford the full costs of delegation fees and travel.

In granting scholarship money, IFPB prioritizes those who would not otherwise be able to join. We also make scholarship money available to people who diversify our delegations and broaden education and advocacy work in the US. We strive to organize delegations diverse in age, gender, sexual orientation, class, ethnic identity and racial background.

DONATE TODAY TO SUPPORT A LOW INCOME DELEGATE

Return the enclosed envelope or donate online at www.ifpbdel.org/donation

WE NEED YOUR HELP

Support our work for peace and justice in Israel/Palestine!

The work of Interfaith Peace-Builders depends on the support of our friends and colleagues. The majority of our funding comes from small donations by individuals like you.

Since 2001, IFPB has brought nearly 350 people to witness the reality of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict while providing resources for education and activism here in North America. Our delegations are essential to building a strong and diverse movement for an end to the Israeli occupation and a peaceful future for Israelis and Palestinians. As we expand our efforts, we are more in need than ever.

Our continued success depends on your donation. **Please give generously today!**



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