

(Article excerpted from Brooklyn Eagle, week of November 15th).

Palestinian Artist and Israeli Dialogue Founder at Borough Park Synagogue bring Active Listening to local Jews.

On Sunday, November 7th in Brooklyn, Haifa Bint Kadi, Palestinian American Muslim Artist, (far left) and Marcia Kannry, (2nd from left), Jewish American, Founder of The Dialogue Project, created an open dialogue and encounter with members of Progressive Temple Ahavath Sholom in Borough Park. Yizhak Awami Levi, a Yemenite Jew and dialogue participant, along with a member of the congregation are pictured alongside Haifa and Marcia.

Haifa and Marcia led members of the community through generous listening, reflection and curious question exercises. This process helps people feel safe and allows trust to evolve. As people become more comfortable with each other, they begin to have difficult conversations about the “elephants in the room,” such as security, safety, women, Jerusalem, forgiveness, and what justice means. Marcia and Haifa provided an exhibition dialogue, where each had a curious question of the other, based on a stereotype about each other’s traditions.

Marcia asked Haifa how she, as a feminist woman, reconciled her spiritual practice and independence with the Islamic concept of submission. Haifa asked Marcia how she as a person of the Jewish faith functions as a Jew and as a deeply spiritual person without a firm personal commitment to G-d.

Their conversation was then opened up to participants who began to reveal their own questions about Islam and also concerns about tensions within the Jewish community and between Orthodox and Reform Jews.

Several people entered the room with an urge to argue and debate the issues of Israel and Palestine. The open environment created by Rabbi Garson Herzfeld and Marcia and Haifa’s deep respect for each other, created a sense of shared purpose...each person learning how his or her own words and actions may create an environment for mutual trust and movement forward.

