

*Dialogue Doings*

*Tax deductible contributions can sent to the below address*

Dear Friends,

Thank you all for your continued support of The Dialogue Project! Our mission is to build trust, relationships and partnerships among peoples of diverse faiths and cultures.

From Bay Ridge to Yonkers, mid-town to ground zero our programs are transforming lives.

Staff and facilitators create face to face English learner programs, youth dialogue exchanges, adult new immigrant and long time resident encounters, Israeli-Palestinian and Interfaith sustainable dialogues. This year we begin offering Dialogue Facilitation Training, a 1 1/2 day program designed by Paula Pace, Haifa Bint Kadi and Marcia Kannry. Call us to register!

**New Immigrants and Long-Time Residents build trust and partnerships**

In June and July The Dialogue Project hosted its 5th Coffee & Conversation program.

**The 9th Annual City Wide Interfaith Teach-In Event "On Approaching the 10th Anniversary of 9/11"**

On May 15th the Borough of Manhattan Community College, Muslim Students Association hosted our 9th Annual City Wide Interfaith Teach-In near ground zero. Focusing on 9/11, and co sponsored by 35 interfaith and civic organizations, hundreds of New Yorkers sit at round-tables with scholars and teachers of diverse cultures.



Rabbi Simkha Weintraub teaches Jewish texts and practices on Community Healing and Trauma at the Dialogue Project's 9th Annual City Wide Teach-In.

Coffee & Conversation is an opportunity for long-time Brooklyn residents to socialize with their new immigrant neighbors while practicing English speaking and comprehension skills. Meeting weekly, small groups and pairs break through the walls of silence that separate our communities while learning about each others cultures and lives here in Brooklyn.

Volunteers of all ages, 20 to 84, came from Brooklyn, Harlem, Queens, including first generation Vietnamese, Pakistani and, Anglo-Americans. English learners, young adults through seniors hailed from

Ecuador, Mexico, Peru, Yemen, Palestine, Russia and the Ukraine.

Participants met at the School for International Studies, the Dawood Mosque where Dr. Ahmad Jaber, founder of the Arab American Association gave a lecture on Muslim traditions, and the Brooklyn Heights Synagogue, where Marcia Kannry, DP Founder gave a tour of the Synagogue and spoke about Jewish traditions.

Coffee & Conversation grew out of Speaking Across Differences, our new immigrant and long time resident face-to-face dialogue program.

People from the stoops, pews, and prayer rugs explore difficult issues. Topics this year were: Conflict Transformation, Community Healing and Trauma, and the Concept of "The Stranger" in our traditions.

Participants were taught how to use Dialogue Project guidelines: Active listening, Speaking from the "I", and reflecting someone of a different faith or perspective, trying to understand his/her intentions and emotions. Each table was facilitated by an experienced dialogue facilitator.



Maryum Said, vice-president of the BMCC's Muslim Student Association at The Dialogue Project's Interfaith Event.



(From left) Rafael Candelaria of Faith House, Rabbi David Ingbar of Romemu and Julia Rabia Gentile, a Sufi Muslim, closed our Teach-In event by weaving a musical tapestry in Hebrew, Arabic and English.



Long time residents & new immigrants at the School for International Studies.



Volunteer Kelly Hartman having a conversation with Yemeni mom.

*"I am able to join in and be comfortable and safe in a Church or Synagogue. It's great to be part of something that can be an example for everyone in the world, especially in the Middle East, to see that we can live among one another in peace."*  
 -Abdul, Muslim Yemeni American

*"I thought I knew how to listen. I thought I listened compassionately. Engaging in the dialogue, I realized how quick I had been to return to my own truths, my own perspectives, instead of truly witnessing another person's life and struggles. The dialogue has taught me humanity"*  
 -Tamara, Jewish African American

### Youth Dialogue Corps

The Dialogue Project is currently organizing the Youth Dialogue Corps, a grass-roots youth mentor and dialogue facilitation program. Brooklyn youth ages 15-17 from different ethnic, social and cultural backgrounds will travel to each other's meeting places from Bushwick to Park Slope.

Participants will engage face to face, identify issues that affect their lives (e.g., immigration,

bullying), and learn how to constructively lead and facilitate small group, community dialogue and action projects.

With spoken word, art, Playback Theatre, dialogue skills and after school workshops, YDCers will cultivate the practice of: Active and generous listening, Speaking from the "I", Reflection (of people with whom you agree or disagree), and acknowledgement, un-

packing assumptions about people who are not from their block or culture.

Together the youth will choose a neighborhood action issue they want to address with adults, and mentor the next group to build a cadre of young community leaders empowered to reach out across generational and ethnic lines.



Past and present Program Coordinators and Youth Dialogue Corps organizers at the Dialogue Project: (From left) Sogand Afkari, Kyle Buetzow and Ahmed Elabd.

## Mid East Dialogue Circles

**Palestinians, Israelis, Jews, Muslims, Christian Americans and People of Diverse Cultures**

### **Cari Gardner, a dialogue participant, speaks of her experience**

A few years ago I was confronted with some really uncomfortable emotions.

My daughter's close friend, from college, whom I adored, and who I'm pretty sure, adored me, stood in the hallway of my home and challenged my core beliefs.

M. is a thirty-something "Palestinian American".

I am a 60-something "American Jew".

(Perhaps it bears validity to look at the semantics of these two titles.)

Both of us passionate, compassionate and involved individuals, we clashed in a discussion about Israel and the situation of the Palestinians in the West Bank.

When M. made reference to brutality done to Palestinian children at the hands of Israeli soldiers I was instantaneously thrown into an emotional turmoil of anger, defense and deep denial that this was even conceivable. I was rendered incapable of thinking or speaking clearly.

M. left my home and for a long time I didn't want her near me, let alone even hear her name mentioned.

My father died in the fall of '05.

I asked Cori to invite her friends, including M. to Shiva.

After a sweet service and songs with our new, embracing synagogue community, M. asked if she could say something.

What she had to say...

This was the first time in her life that she was amongst a group of Jews. She was surprised to learn what warm and loving people we were. She had always seen "us" as violent and hateful.

Fast forward to now.

I have been participating in the Dialogue Project for several years.

I'm not learned in the history of the land, but I was 3 years old when Israeli state hood was declared and I've been in love with it ever since.

The more deeply I'm engaged in Dialogue the more my heart and mind have been in a state of turmoil

It's been emotionally draining to look at my fear and anger and allow my story to be heard openly and honestly by the "other".

And - to hear the fear and anger of the "other". The setting provides safety and support for us all.

The approach allows for listening deeply within ourselves. The process allows gradual unfolding of more and more truth within ourselves and amongst each other.

It's scary, it's provocative, but I am beginning to see how this approach can lead to transformation.

What am I afraid of? What does it mean that Israel is an occupying force? What is our culpability in Gaza? Should we dismantle our settlements in the West Bank? Have Israelis been guilty of brutality? Are these ideas anti-Israel? Anti Semitic?

Maybe not.

All this thought and emotion is like ripping my guts out.

But - there ARE (at least) two sides to every story.

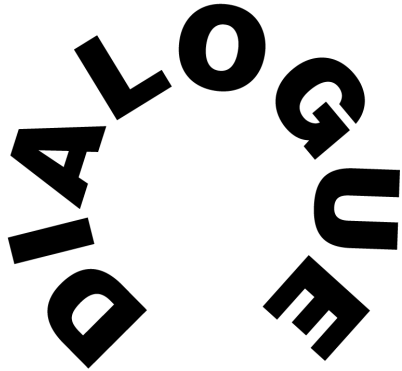
We need to hear each other's truths.

For numbers of years I've possessed great intellectual clarity and concern that the intractable differences, suffering, and anguish between Israelis and Palestinians will never go away by killing and bloodshed. While intellectualizing, it was easy to say we just need to stop looking backwards, start with NOW and move forward. But this is probably the deepest sibling rivalry of all creation and in order to allow for peace we need to rip the multi-generational pain out by its gut wrenching roots. The Dialogue Project provides just such opportunity.

Cari Gardner  
 August 2011



Middle East Dialogue participants, (From left): Alia and Eman Rashid, Yitzhak Levy-Awami, Dr. Ahmed Jaber and Julie Lewis.



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The Dialogue Project thanks the Plymouth Church of Pilgrims, Judith Scheuer, Helen Engelhardt  
and the Pace Foundation for their continued support.