

DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

This dissertation is a qualitative study investigating how a North American based citizen diplomacy effort—the Compassionate Listening Project—is working to promote peace and reconciliation between Arabs and Jews in Israel, Gaza and the West Bank. This study is placed in the context of examining citizens' emerging role as peacebuilders in divided societies. Using participant observations and in-depth interviews, this study looks at how citizens involved with this project construct and reconstruct the meaning of conflict, peace and peacebuilding through their words, behaviors and interactions. This approach allows for an exploration of the full dynamics of the project, taking into account social, political and historical dimensions. Examining the project from multiple standpoints, this research further reveals the resonance, convergencies, dissonance and disjunctures in individual and organizational beliefs and goals with regards to peacebuilding strategies and goals. These findings further illuminate how ordinary citizens grapple with the complex matters that arise in ethnic and identity-based conflict. In particular, they reveal the ways that citizens aim at pursuing social justice agendas (which often aggravate social tensions) and agendas of reconciliation (which seek to heal those same tensions) at the same time. Illuminated through this project's experiences are valuable clues about how citizens are attempting to negotiate what John Paul Lederach has described as the tension between revolutionary and resolutionary approaches to peacebuilding. This work contributes to the literature of peacebuilding and Palestinian-Israeli peace and conflict resolution. In particular, it contributes to the neglected area of Americans involvement in citizen based peace processes.

THE COMPASSIONATE LISTENING PROJECT:
A CASE STUDY IN CITIZEN DIPLOMACY AND PEACEMAKING

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DISSERTATION

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PREFACE

Reaching the end of this project, it is humbling to realize just how many individuals I have to thank for support that made this project possible. It is a joy and honor to have this opportunity to express how grateful I am to everyone.

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How grateful I am to Joan L. Bolker, writing coach *par excellence*, for her uncanny ability to give the words "just keep writing" such fresh and compelling meaning regardless of how many times she would repeat them. Thank you Joan, for your interest and enthusiasm in the unfolding of the writing, and for teaching me how I could trust the very act of writing to discover what it is I had to say.

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for so many of my better qualities. Especially during those many years when it was just the two of us, you taught me to love and grow through the best and worst of times. And finally, my deepest thanks goes to my husband, Ray DiCapua, for his steadfast encouragement, wise counsel, patience and unquestioning willingness to endure with me the many sacrifices and hardships that completing a dissertation entails. But, most of all, your commitment to looking deeply into this life with honest and loving attention has been my touchstone, reminding me over and over again that there is good reason to trust in the human capacity to develop a more just and peaceful world.

In memory of

Dave Andrus, Faisal Hussein, Sara Kaminker and Hussein Issa

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

“I’m only one person, and my efforts are small, person-to person, but this is where I feel I can make a difference in a region of the world I care deeply about.”

“In order to be effective, we had to listen to words that hurt. In order to do that we had to see beyond the categories we might want to place our speakers into [such as] settler, Arab, terrorist, Israeli, government official or victim. We had to see the human being behind any and all categories.”¹

In January of 1998, twenty-two American Jews traveled to Israel, Gaza and the West Bank as self-anointed peacemakers on the first Compassionate Listening delegation. Their stated objective was to go and to listen. Over the course of their two-week stay, this delegation was audience to an array of voices, representing diverse locations throughout the political and social landscape of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. They began in a Palestinian village outside of Jerusalem, where they met with town council members. From there they traveled to Hebron where they stayed with Palestinian families and visited with Israeli settlers. They met with Israeli peace activists, Palestinian refugees, journalists, dialogue groups, founding members of the PLO, and officials from the Israeli government. They also went to Gaza: sixteen American Jews, traveling on a Palestinian bus into the city with an entourage of Palestinian soldiers. When they got there, one of their visits was to the home of Sheik Yassin, the spiritual leader of Hamas, a known terrorist organization responsible for a number of Israeli deaths. At the end of the meeting with Sheik

¹ Statements are by former participants in the Compassionate Listening Project as quoted in the project’s web page, www.mideastdiplomacy.org.

Yassin, similar to other meetings, the compassionate listeners all stood with hands out, palms up, as they offered blessings upon departure.

Since this first Compassionate Listening trip, this project has led over a dozen additional delegations, taking close to 500 individuals, to Israel, Gaza and the West Bank. These ongoing missions are organized by the Compassionate Listening Project, a North American-based, non-governmental organization (NGO) founded and directed by Leah Green, with the declared purpose of promoting reconciliation and peace between Arabs and Jews. When I first encountered this project, I became curious about the degree to which the ethos, ideals and goals of the project seemed to be resonating with a wide range of individuals. This resonance was reflected largely in the steady growth of the project and the enthusiasm with which participants would speak about it. This study is largely based on this original curiosity. I looked at how different project constituents were interpreting and responding to the encounters and their experiences. Embedded in this, I suspected, were clues as to how certain populations are making sense of issues of identity, conflict and peace, and the kinds of actions they are attempting as a result.

These trips are each composed of about fifteen delegates who have all successfully applied and paid for the experience of *listening*, sometimes to individuals with whom they may deeply disagree. Organized and guided by the project's small staff of coordinators and facilitators, the delegation begins with an intensive training in what Compassionate Listening is and how it is done. Beyond the training, delegates go on to attend as many as thirty listening sessions, each lasting anywhere from one to three hours. The substance of these sessions usually includes dramatic,

personal stories of tragedy and loss, as well as stories of courage and hopefulness for the possibilities for peace. In addition to absorbing the content of these sessions, delegates negotiate the physical, emotional, and intellectual complexities of the landscape they are traversing: the disparities between East and West Jerusalem (for that matter, between North American privilege and the hardships of third world poverty); the tensions of traversing borders; the difficulties and joys of traveling in a group; and, the troubling nature of identity (often including their own). Delegates often describe these trips as intense, challenging, transformative, life-altering experiences. Indeed, for many of the Jewish participants, just crossing the line into East Jerusalem and checking into the Palestinian run hotel—base camp for the duration of the trip—is an experience of tremendous meaning and challenge.

In November 1999, the fourth-Compassionate Listening delegation stayed, as have many of the delegations, in the National Palace Hotel in East Jerusalem. This was the first of two Compassionate Listening delegations that I traveled with as a participant observer. The swank and shabby 1950s decor of the hotel provided the setting for the training, the daily check-ins and many of the listening sessions—all standard features of the trips. Open windows allowed some air to flow in and relieve the otherwise hot and often smoky environment. Being at street level meant being bombarded by an onslaught of street sounds: engines revving, honking horns, sounding car alarms, construction noises and shouting all supplied the backdrop for many of these sessions. A poorly constructed partition meant that the group sometimes had to contend with interruptions and the competing noise of other parallel events happening in the hotel. The noisy, impervious nature of this physical setting

plunges the delegations into the intensity of Palestinian East Jerusalem and offers an immediate suggestion as to the temperament and passion that makes up the conflict.

Among other activities, the Compassionate Listening training usually includes a role-play, performed by Israeli and Palestinian friends of the project, that plunges delegates directly into the murky, tangled depths of the conflict. With the raw pulse of the street pounding in the background, the group's first invited speaker, Zoughbi al Zoughbi, explains how people (referring specifically to Israelis and Palestinians locked in conflict with one another) have lost the temper to listen to one another. As he speaks, sounds from the Palestinian Street pour in through the windows, acting to contrast the feeling tone of the Compassionate Listening process. The project director, Leah Green adds to what Zoughbi is saying by explaining how the Compassionate Listening Project was created in response to watching people scream at one another. As she speaks, the human noise level from the street just outside the perimeters of the meeting suddenly gets louder, as if to affirm what she is saying.

These depictions of the Compassionate Listening Project contain clues about the many complex features of the project. The citizens that go on these trips are just that, they are ordinary citizens, who somehow care enough about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to travel there to listen, look and learn. In the example of the first delegation, the fact that these were American Jews, meeting with the spiritual leader of what they would likely term a terrorist organization suggests that these individuals are prepared to cross 'enemy' lines for the sake of peace. The fact that this meeting took place at all suggests the kind of networks that are in place allowing for such a meeting to happen. The diversity of individuals and organizations they meet with

reveals that the key agenda for the trips involves a direct engagement with various facets of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Yet, they went to listen, exposing the use of a methodology, or tool. Finally, the blessings that were exchanged at the end of the meeting with Sheik Yassin reveal how the use of ritual and spirituality is perhaps also an aspect of this project's ethos or *modus operandi*. Only when these diverse features are feathered out and brought into focus does a composite of the project's hybrid nature begin to come into focus.

More clues about the project's complex features are reflected in the two epigraphs at the start of this chapter. Revealed in these statements made by two participants about the project and their experience, are some of the key values, assumptions and beliefs that motivate interest, guide actions and most importantly, result in claims about the project's significance and effectiveness. Such claims are echoed by a variety of scholars and practitioners working to develop techniques and theories about conflict resolution and peacebuilding. First, contrary to traditional, top-down approaches to international diplomacy and peacemaking, is the assumption that citizens have an important role to play in arenas of protracted, social conflict. Many scholars have argued that small, person to person efforts can make a positive difference in arenas of protracted, ethnic struggle, such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Saunders 1999; Weiner 1998; Rasmussen 1997; Rothman 1997; Lederach 1997). Second, primary to the methodology of Compassionate Listening is the belief that activities which emphasize the humanity of each party are key to transforming adversarial relationships, and that transforming adversarial relationships is key to building peace. This emphasis on transformative listening processes is in alignment

with many conflict resolution techniques and practices (Wilmot and Hocker 1998; Rothman 1997; Bush and Folger, 1994).

Furthermore seen from a multi-track perspective (Diamond and McDonald 1991), the Compassionate Project can be situated among a variety of unofficial interventions in the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Serving as a kind of nexus for several different networks and approaches, this project offers a valuable site for investigating how meanings—in this case, meanings around concepts of peace, reconciliation, justice and coexistence—are embedded in context and, importantly, how that in turn shapes perceptions and actions.

A Hybrid Strategy

Defining the Compassionate Listening project and how it is situated within, between and among other peacebuilding efforts contains some slippery challenges. The project organizes trips to Israel, and the Palestinian territories based on the ideals and traditions of people-to-people movement that can be traced back to the 1980s and the Cold War. While the roots of this project are clearly located within this citizen diplomacy tradition (as I detail in Chapter Four), the project also incorporates a methodology—Compassionate Listening—that is in line with human-relations approaches to conflict resolution, and more specifically in line with approaches to dialogue, coexistence and reconciliation. Considering that the project is founded upon an integration of these two distinct features—citizen diplomacy and the use of a conflict intervention technology—examining how the project is situated within both traditions is an important starting place for defining the project. Complicating this

analysis however is a third central feature of the project. The people-to-people or citizen diplomacy movement was founded on ideals about what would happen when American and Soviet citizens—enemies in a Cold War—came together in ways that the humanity of one another could be seen and experienced. Similarly, human-relations approaches to conflict resolution in general are designed to facilitate face-to-face encounters between the primary adversaries in a conflict situation. In contrast to this, the Compassionate Listening Project is primarily founded on encounters that do not involve direct meetings between Israelis and Palestinians. Rather, the delegates in these encounters are North Americans, and often time Jewish North Americans. As such, the role these delegates play can be described as a delicate dance between third-party intermediary and a kind of removed-first party—an insider-outsider—to the conflict. Addressing this complex third party/insider-outsider feature becomes important to understanding the complex nature of the project and what this tells us about citizen peacebuilding in today's interconnected world of layered and overlapping identities.

The third key feature of the project therefore involves considering the complex nature of these North American delegates as a third side to the conflict. Providing some framework for analyzing the project's complex structure and assessing how it may actually be contributing to the peacebuilding process is William Ury's concept of *the Third Side* (1999) and his framework for the roles that citizens can play in order to constructively contribute to peacebuilding. Ury has given a name and language to the constructive roles that people on the sidelines of a conflict have always played in the constructive transformation of conflicts so that these roles can be

enacted with a more critical and explicit understanding and intention. As such, the Third Side perspective and framework outlines the specific ways that intermediaries in a conflict can prevent, resolve and contain a conflict before it erupts into violence. With this in mind, I have noted the ways that these citizen delegates are possibly mobilizing this third-side potential and specifically in Chapter Five I analyze these roles in relation to how delegates are making sense of the trips and their experiences.

Among the wide array of third side roles that Ury describes, I observed the Compassionate Listening delegates acting as provider, bridge-builder, equalizer, mediator, healer, witness and peacekeeper as they move through and within the field of the conflict. Functioning in a provider capacity, I watched delegates offer money to organizations and individuals in need. In a bridge-builder capacity, I watched unlikely relationships being forged and developed. The equalizer, according to Ury's model, addresses power imbalances. He notes: "Whether the powerful negotiate with the weak usually depends on the rest of us" (Ury 1999, 161). A letter campaign on behalf of an individual jailed by the Palestinian Authority is one example of delegates acting in the role of equalizer. On another occasion, I took part as the Compassionate Listening delegation I was with spontaneously joined a demonstration against a scheduled home demolition on the edges of East Jerusalem. Functioning like mediators, I watched information get transferred between disputants in a kind of citizen's version of shuttle diplomacy. In the role of healer, more than one Palestinian reported to me the healing effects they experienced through sharing stories of injustice, injury and suffering. Witnesses pay attention to signs of escalation,

watching out for early warning signals. In this regard, an excerpt from a conversation I had with Leah Green after the outbreak of the second Intifada is telling:

If people had seen what we had seen in the West Bank then [the outbreak of violence] wouldn't have come as such a surprise. 'Cause we all predicted it. I mean, it was easy to see. We saw that there was a constant deterioration, that nothing ever changed for Palestinians on the ground. The house demolitions, land confiscations, the settlement expansion, the road-block/check point situation, everything continued unevaded. There was never one time when things got better... When I talk with people who have gone on our trips they say things like: 'If Israelis and others had seen what we had seen they would have understood.'

Finally, one of the key capacities of the peacekeeper is to provide protection to vulnerable groups. In this regard, some of the Palestinians advocating for human rights feel under scrutiny from both the Palestinian Authority and the Israeli government. Several individuals reported to me feeling protected by the project's friendship and their regular visits by the delegates.

While these examples and many more are all a part of the repertoire of roles and activities in which these delegates partake, most of these third-side functions happen in an ad hoc fashion. The role of equalizer, for instance, which is activist in its orientation, is nowhere part of the declared mission of the project. And, while some of the Israelis and Palestinians report feeling helped by the listeners, the majority of those that the project meets with are in fact seasoned speakers, advocates and activists that aim to inform and mobilize their audiences. These individuals indeed come to be listened to, however not to heal their wounds. Their motives are directly linked to a call to action. When the content of the Compassionate Listening encounters, along with the identity of the individuals involved are examined up close, the declared simplicity of the methodology of Compassionate Listening—listening heals and

supports reconciliation—breaks down. The complexity of these trips in this regard deserves to be further explored, which is the aim of the following chapters.

A Different Agenda

It turns out that for the majority of groups and individuals that appear regularly on the Compassionate Listening itinerary, the Compassionate Listening Project is one of many North American and European groups with which they meet in order to disseminate information and to enlist support. This includes members of the Israeli peace movement, activists, Palestinian human rights workers, as well as conflict resolution and reconciliation specialists. The circuit also extends to government officials and ordinary citizens who are impacted, one way or another, by the conflict. In this regard, the Compassionate Listening Project can be considered part of a cadre of North American and European groups that interact within a discursive arena where activism and peacebuilding overlap and come together. Global Exchange, Christian Peacemakers Team and the Fellowship of Reconciliation are all North American-based groups that conduct citizen tours comparable to the Compassionate Listening Project in that they all share overlapping itineraries. What distinguishes the Compassionate Listening trips has been the application of the methodology of Compassionate Listening as a tool for reconciliation and bridge building. This distinction results in noteworthy ideological and practical differences.

A look at how the philosophy of action for the Compassionate Listening Project compares to that of a similar North American citizen diplomacy group proves informative. Since 1989, Global Exchange has conducted what it calls “Reality

Tours” to many parts of the world including Israel and the Palestinian territories. Just as the Compassionate Listening Project is grounded in a particular philosophy and methodology about reconciliation and peacebuilding, Reality Tours are similarly grounded in a philosophy of social change and social justice advocacy. The ideology of the organization is based in philosophies of non-violent activism and social change. The emphasis of their tours is education—the raising of consciousness—that will lay the seeds for action. Here is how the goals of the tours, called “fact finding delegations,” are expressed on the project’s web site:

Tours are meant to educate people about how we, individually and collectively, contribute to global problems, and, then, to suggest ways in which we can contribute to positive change (Global Exchange)*.

There are a number of similarities between the Compassionate Listening delegations and the Reality Tours of Global Exchange. Both are citizen delegations that aim to work towards peace in the region. Trips are about the same length and they share a large degree of overlap in their itineraries. While similar in these respects, the two organizations do differ in their approach to peacemaking. Whereas one organization emphasizes listening, the other emphasizes education. One emphasizes healing, the other action.

The roots of this ideological distinction can be traced to the early days of citizen diplomacy and the so-called consensus movements of the 1980s. The so-called *polite protesters* of that era framed their efforts in a way that circumvented political confrontation. This emphasis on the bridge building goals—resolution goals—of citizen diplomacy work stood in contrast to the revolutionary agendas that were

* Global Exchange, What are Reality Tours, Frequently Asked Questions: <http://globalexchange.org/tours/faq.html.pf> (accessed August 1, 2003).

characteristic of the 1960s and 1970s (Lofland 1993, 2). In his book about the Cold War citizen diplomacy movement of the 1980s, John Lofland describes key characteristics of this movement: “[The] surface features of consensus movements include the claim to be nonpolitical, or nonpartisan, and not to be negative, or oppositional” (Lofland 1993, 2). Lofland’s observations provide an historical perspective on what distinguishes the Compassionate Listening Project from an organization such as Global Exchange. While Global Exchange embraces education as its strategy for social change, the Compassionate Listening Project embraces listening. One could argue that the goal of listening is also about education. Yet, there is another application that is emphasized by the Compassionate Listening methodology. That is the objective of healing. According to the project literature, Compassionate Listening delegates are contributing to the conflict through the healing power of listening.

Within the choices that serve to distinguish the Compassionate Listening Project from the activist ideologies and agenda of a project such as Global Exchange, there is an important story to be told. Although Compassionate Listening is emphasized as a healing process for listeners and speakers alike, the itinerary, when examined up close and in context, reveals the complexities that are associated with this agenda. In Chapter Four I emphasize the rationale behind the choices that Leah has made about the direction and growth of the project. At the heart of these choices, Green is navigating a complex tension that exists between the international peace movement and mainstream Jewish and Israeli perspectives. Seeking to include, for instance, a focus on human rights concerns for Palestinians living under occupation,

she risks aligning herself with an activist agenda that is seen, particularly from a mainstream Jewish perspective, as anti-Israeli. It is noteworthy, for this reason, that the Compassionate Listening Project has embraced a philosophy of action that serves to distance itself, not from action, per se, but from an activist or advocacy stance that historically has been openly critical of Israeli and U.S. policy with regards to the conflict. Because of its inclusive, non-partisan nature, I describe in Chapters Four and Five how the Compassionate Listening Project has succeeded in carving out a discursive space that invites new actors into the field of the conflict who are open and willing to listen and learn.

Overview of the Study

This study is grounded in the interpretive, qualitative traditions of sociology. Its specific focus is the Compassionate Listening delegations to Israel, Gaza and the West Bank. Specifically, I look at the complexities that arise for citizens as third side actors engaged to help in the transformation of this intractable, identity-based conflict. The primary source of the data for this research was collected through participant observations and in-depth interviews conducted during two Compassionate Listening delegations: November 1999 and March 2000. Secondary sources include articles and other forms of documentation produced by the project, the delegates and/or speakers. Chapter Two describes in greater detail the methodology that I used to gather and process the data that is presented in this study. I explain how I came to choose to study the Compassionate Listening Project, and why I chose to do so using qualitative methods. While I explore some of the key

challenges that I encountered using an interpretive tradition in a cross cultural context, this chapter argues for the value of research that makes visible the subjective worldview of its subjects, especially in situations pertaining to conflict and social change.

In Chapter Three I identify the academic literature that most informs this study. In short, this research is placed in the context of examining citizens' emerging role as peacebuilders in divided societies, a domain for which there has been much theoretical attention in the conflict resolution field, but very little empirical research. I explain how this in-depth, empirical case study helps to fill a gap of knowledge about contemporary citizen attitudes, assumptions and approaches towards peacebuilding, particularly around the nexus of reconciliation, justice and coexistence. Further, I flesh out some of the vital questions that academics and practitioners in the field of conflict resolution and related domains are grappling with: questions about the nature of human nature, the nature of social change and how these relate to matters of peace and conflict. In doing so, I give context to the activities, experiences and perspectives illuminated in my findings.

From these findings, the activities, experiences and perspectives illuminated are those of the three main constituency groups of the project: the project leadership (Chapter Four); the North American delegate listeners (Chapter Five) and the Israeli and Palestinians speakers (Chapter Six). I examine how these three constituency groups construct and negotiate meaning about their actions and experiences. The result is a complex mosaic of perspectives, meanings and experiences that shows how the project works from multiple perspectives. Understanding how these various

constituents are giving meaning to the various encounters and activities, reveals intersecting perspectives on peace, justice and reconciliation. It further reveals how the methodology of Compassionate Listening prepares and mobilizes people for new political encounters.

In Chapter Four I explore how the project leadership is compelled by a bridge building agenda, on the one hand, and how this intersects with an agenda that also seeks to amend injustice, on the other hand. The story I tell about how the project evolved into being is one that reveals how the intersection of certain ideological traditions and aspects of identity come together in shaping this complex agenda. More specifically, I tell how these trips grew out of the tradition of the people-to-people movement of the Cold War era, and the ways that Leah Green has had to adapt that tradition to the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Central to this, is her identity as a Jewish American. The complexities that arise for her are informed by political sensibilities that are concerned for injustices experienced by Palestinians, on the one hand; and an affinity for and sense of solidarity with Israel on the other. In this chapter, I reveal how the Compassionate Listening Project was born out of her struggle to negotiate these conflicting agendas.

In Chapter Five I turn to the Compassionate Listening delegates to examine who these delegates are and how it is that they are making sense of the encounters. With an eye to the multiple locations and perspectives represented among this constituency, I examine how various relationships to and perspectives on the conflict are informed through identity. This is especially emphasized through the contrasting views and experiences of Jewish and Palestinian delegates, along with delegates with

other identities. I learned quickly that delegates like to tell stories about their experiences. It has been well noted within the field of conflict resolution that conflict can be transformed through the transformation of narratives about the conflict. For this reason, I look at how the stories that these delegates are telling about their experiences are generating new forms of shared meanings and shared understandings.

The focus of Chapter Six is the world that these delegations visit. Through examining where the delegates go, who it is they meet with and what the substance of these encounters are, I give shape to the broad field of actors, standpoints, ideologies and agendas represented within this diverse constituency. Revealed here are the choices that Leah Green has made about the project's itinerary and how these choices serve to characterize the delegations. Importantly, her itineraries have cultivated pathways through the social and political terrain of both Israeli and Palestinian societies. These pathways cut deep into the complex territory of the Israeli peace movement, at the same time, that they have established deep and lasting bonds with elements of Palestinian society committed to non-violent solutions to the conflict. Her itineraries further connect delegates to those positioned on the extreme right of Israeli society, as well as with Palestinians who see violent struggle as a legitimate option for Palestinians. I provide some social, political and historical context to what the delegates hear. Further, I look at why these groups and individuals chose to meet with the project and what they hope to accomplish through doing so.

Finally, in the conclusion, I attempt to make sense of the convergencies and contradictions revealed through the complex and mixed agendas of the three project constituents. In doing so I return to the question of how the Compassionate Listening

Project may be contributing to peace and justice between Arabs and Jews. The question takes on added significance given the escalating violence that has engulfed the region since the start of this research. What I hope to show is how the project functions as an important element of a complex web of actors and projects. By itself, the project might easily be dismissed as insignificant. Yet, seen in the context of the whole, its place and purpose is revealed. I make the argument that the project is indeed offering something of value to the transformation to the conflict, however this value is often different from how its purpose is conceived and understood by its constituents.

Significance

Green claims that in the past decade, no one has declined a listening session with the project. Against the backdrop of a crumbled peace process, and an ongoing new cycle of violence in the region, Green's vision—emphasizing listening as one of the keys to breaking the cycles of violence—is supported by the many who resonate with the project's intentions and as such it continues to expand and grow. This study is in large part an examination of the resonance that this project's philosophy and methodology has for its delegates.

When a group of peace activists stormed their way onto the center stage of an international conflict—as was the case April/May 2002 at the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem—this action underscores how distinctions between first track and second track diplomacy are often blurred in the context of our contemporary world. This event dramatizes the importance of ensuring the successful integration of

grassroots activities into peacebuilding efforts at all levels. Towards that end, embedded in these findings are valuable insights into the various conceptual handles that a variety of peace-builders are using to organize experience and guide action. One of the most obvious yet striking observations I made while conducting field research was that everyone I encountered, regardless of where they were positioned ideologically or politically in the conflict, proclaims a deep desire for peace. The differences are in how peace is defined and conceptualized and in the strategies that are embraced for achieving the goal. For most social movements, the conceptual handles, or theories of social change go largely unarticulated. In the case of this particular citizen peacebuilding effort, my aim has been to flesh these theories of action into a visible foreground so that they are available for analysis. As John Lofland's research on the American peace movement during the 1980s illustrates, it is not uncommon for social movements to embody competing, contradictory, sometimes complimentary social change theories (Lofland 1993, 2).

It is significant that the collapse of a peace process has not discouraged those committed to the ideals of the project. Less obvious is an understanding of why that is. Leah Green continues to maintain and build relationships across enormous difference. Is it that Green has found a successful formula for navigating the morass of identity and activist politics? Or, is this just another example of what John Lofland criticizes as *polite, disguised* or *timid* politics? Concern for the tension between these two questions is echoed in the conflict resolution field through a concern for the tension between issues of justice, on the one hand, and prevalent assumptions about the importance of rebuilding and transforming adversarial relationships on the other

(Promoting Justice Conference, 1999)*. Seen as a microcosm of what goes on elsewhere, the Compassionate Listening Project turns out to be a valuable site for uncovering how citizen peacebuilders are making sense of and negotiating this tension.

* Full conference title: "Promoting Justice and Peace through Reconciliation and Coexistence Alternatives." Hosted by American University's Center for Global Peace and cosponsored by the Abraham Fund. Feb. '99.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORIES AND PERSPECTIVES ON PEACEBUILDING AND SOCIAL CHANGE

When pursuing social change, questions about what should be the first priority have been a long-standing matter of philosophical interest and debate. What is more important? Is it efforts that expand individual and personal capacities? Or, is it efforts seeking to redress systems and structures? Do we start with the world *out there*—focusing on the distribution of power and resources within and between societies—or the world *within*—aiming to develop awareness, growth, and commitment to change on a personal level? While various approaches to peacebuilding and social justice can be located along the full range of this spectrum, conversations about how to approach these endeavors in a complimentary, integrated way are fairly new. Consequently tensions do exist around how to set priorities. For instance, those committed to promoting attitude change must contend increasingly with critical perspectives which prioritize and address the structural roots of social conflict. On the other hand, those that pursue strictly the structural roots at the heart of a conflict situation—often the tactics and goals of critical social movements—are at risk of polarizing and enflaming conflict in ways that do not easily lead to constructive resolution. In other words, the bridge building skills of the peacemaker are key to conflict transformation work. At the same time, bridge building skills devoid of a critical social justice perspective are arguably shallow at best.

Since the 1960s the field of conflict resolution has grown parallel and in conjunction with the development of social movements (Kriesberg 2001, 410). From

his experience as both a mediator and a non-violent activist, John Paul Lederach (1995) has written about the distinct differences between social justice activists and conflict resolution practitioners along with a tension that often exists between the two. He sums up this tension in a brief dialogue with a friend:

[The friend] asked rhetorically, ‘You know the trouble with the activists?’ and answered, ‘They assume that having the vision and speaking out for nonviolent social change is the same as having the technique and skill to.’
 ‘On the other side of the coin,’ I responded, ‘having the technique and skill does not necessarily provide the vision.’ (11)

In short, Lederach is suggesting that either approach—the *revolutionary* and *resolutionary camps*, as he calls them—are short sighted and flawed to the degree that one is exclusive of the other; and, that both camps have something important to gain from one another. Assuming a vision of justice to be an essential feature of peacemaking, Lederach distinguishes these two approaches like this: “Advocacy, for example, chooses to stand by one side for justice’s sake. Mediation chooses to stand in connection to all sides for justice’s sake” (14).

Further examining the relationship between non-violent activism and mediation, John Paul Lederach builds on the work of Adam Curl. This analysis is based on three key assumptions. One, that the bases of social conflicts are generally rooted in some form of perceived inequality or power imbalance. Two, that awareness and knowledge of this asymmetry is often lacking within the society or societies in question. And finally, that in order to move a conflict in the direction of sustainable peace, awareness of the conflict—in particular, an awareness of the legitimate needs and interests of all concerned—must increase. In this way, the progression from unpeaceful to peaceful relations can be charted as moving from latent to overt, often

with confrontation as an intermediate step before sides engage in conflict resolution processes (13). From this view, activists work on behalf of those who are seeking social change. Their role, as Lederach puts it, “is aimed at erasing ignorance and raising awareness as to the nature of unequal relationships and the need for addressing and restoring equity, as seen, of course, from the view of those experiencing the injustices” (12). While activism often pursues confrontation towards the goal of awakening complacency and mobilizing change agents, peacebuilders are working to reduce a sense of *adversariness*. At the same time, these peacemakers are often building on the work of activists who, through agitating social tensions, have cultivated an acute awareness of the issues at the base of the conflict.

A comparing of the Compassionate Listening Project web site with an analysis of its itinerary suggests that the Compassionate Listening Project espouses the goals of Lederach’s two *camp*s simultaneously. On the one hand, the goals of the project are expressed as follows:

We have built respectful and trusting relationships at every level of Israeli and Palestinian society, and extend an invitation to you to join us in entering both societies very deeply to listen, learn and build bridges of understanding. Our work focuses on bridging the gap between Jews/Israelis and Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza. (Compassionate Listening Project)*

At the same time, an analysis of the itineraries for these delegations reveals that advocacy for the injustice experienced by Palestinians is a dominant theme of the project.

Further in alignment with the goals of social justice activism, some of the project’s activities—such as the hands-on rebuilding of demolished Palestinian homes—can be

* Compassionate Listening Project Web Site: MidEast Citizen Diplomacy, Compassionate Listening Project, About: <http://www.mideastdiplomacy.org> (accessed 1998).

considered political in that they challenge contested Israeli policies. Given this contradictory feature of the project, it becomes a valuable site for examining the attitudes, assumptions and values reflected in contemporary—*popular*—peacemaking practices, particularly as they relate to the nexus of reconciliation, justice and coexistence. A key reason I was initially drawn to the Compassionate Listening Project was because I was curious about the ways this project seemed to be experimenting—either consciously or in an ad hoc, perhaps intuitive manner—with both the interior and exterior dimensions of conflict transformation. Importantly in this regard, the themes that emerge from this study are examined in light of emerging themes of inquiry and practice in the field. Bringing light to these themes, what follows here is a look at some of the core bodies of theory and research that have informed this inquiry, along with my observations about the emerging new directions in the field to which this study hopes to contribute.

The Conceptual Terrain of Citizen Peacemaking

Given that government officials have traditionally embraced a realist perspective on international relations, a tension between citizen peacemakers and government officials has been an ongoing reality. As early as 1959, former President Harry S. Truman was denouncing citizen diplomacy efforts because he saw them as “meddling” in government business in a way that could potentially serve to benefit our adversaries, thus further compounding the complexities of a conflict situation (Berman and Johnson 1997, 2). More recently, the Bush administration’s systematic dismissal of worldwide protest against the US preemptive war on Iraq can be seen as

suggestive of civil society's relative lack of power in matters of war and peace. Despite what may appear, citizens are in fact an increasingly noted feature of the landscape of conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts. In this regard, this study has primary location in this expanding conceptual terrain of citizen peacebuilding.

Since the end of the Cold War, the world of global politics has undergone a turbulent transformation. The breakdown of a bipolar system has unleashed a period of global disorder characterized by uncertainty (Rasmussen 1997, 24). The intensity, destructiveness and persistent nature of conflicts such as in the Middle East, the Balkans and Rwanda has influenced a shift in traditional thinking about diplomacy and peacemaking. Inter-communal conflicts inevitably involve issues that extend into the deeper social fabric of society, beyond the reaches and interests of the state. As a result, it has become widely accepted by many practitioners and theorists in the conflict resolution field that these conflicts can not be effectively addressed simply through the formulation and implementation of political agreements.

Citizen efforts seeking to address inter-communal conflict can now thus be seen as part of the larger world of international diplomacy and peacemaking. From World War II to the end of the Cold War, Realism served as the dominant paradigm for understanding international politics (22-27). As an ideological lens, Realism, or "Power Politics" interpreted the bipolar international system in unambiguous terms. Among its fundamental tenets is the assumption of the sovereign nation state as the only significant international actor (25). Competition was understood as the modus operandi of state relations, with military and economic might as the key determinant of power. Within such a system, citizens and citizen groups, working to build bridges

between enemies, have no significant place. The breakdown of the bipolar system has ushered forth an increase in the numbers and kinds of people who challenge the assumptions of Realist politics and sent many of them searching for a new interpretive model.

This new paradigm, referred to in the International Relations field as Pluralism, acknowledges non-state actors as important entities that cannot be ignored and embraces the need to respond to the full complexity of socio-political dynamics within societies (Viotti and Kauppi 1998). Various perspectives and frameworks have been outlined by different conflict resolution scholars. John Paul Lederach (1997), for instance, argues for an integrative, comprehensive approach to peacemaking that calls for leadership from top, middle to grassroots levels of society to address the respective and varied needs of affected populations (39). Similarly, Jay Rothman (1992) asserts that politics need to be better informed by the personal and social dimensions of culture, values, needs and experiences of parties in the conflict (18).

In his book, *A Public Peace Process*, Harold Saunders (1999) adds to the growing body of work that challenges the assumptions of Realist politics by asserting that non-state actors have an important role to play in the domain of international diplomacy and peacemaking. Contrary to traditional, top-down approaches, he asserts that, in the case of deep-rooted social conflicts, governments cannot make peace alone (22). Where diplomacy, negotiation and mediation are the tools of government, according to Saunders, dialogue is the tool of the people (8). Through developing the capacity for sustained, public dialogue citizens can partner with government towards the creation of a multi-leveled, public peace process. Writing from thirty years of

experience as a high-level diplomat and a facilitator of political dialogues, what Saunders carves out is the conceptual ground—a theory of citizen dialogue—and the practical steps with which citizens can come together in order to transform conflictual relationships.

Jay Rothman (1992) looks to the Arab-Israeli conflict as an example supporting his assertion that new kinds of responses are needed to address inter-communal conflict. He argues in his book *From Confrontation to Cooperation: Resolving Ethnic and Regional Conflict* that, in the case of the Middle East and elsewhere opportunities for peace have been missed because the lens has been overly political, leaving out the human core of culture, values, needs and experiences of parties in the conflict (18). He challenges the prevailing concern for “national interests” and asserts that politics should be approached from the “inside out,” that is, from the perspective of people’s hopes, hurts, values and needs. In his words:

This book, and indeed a whole new stream emerging in the fields of international relations and international conflict resolution, emphasizes the human communities and their social needs as a new focus for the conduct of international relations and the quest for peace. In the last years of the twentieth century, a century marked by global state building and intensive international conflict, a parallel diplomacy must be initiated in which the emphasis given to political and state relations is also given to cultural and community relations within and across state borders (18).

Rothman is stressing the need for efforts that aim to create the social conditions for peace that will ensure the success of political agreements, once they are in place.

Similarly, also from a systemic perspective that is concerned with the interrelationship between social and political dimensions of conflict resolution, Louis Kreisberg (1998) points to the internal revolt and dissension that can result when the

public is left out of “transformative interactions” (313). He points to the signing of the Oslo Accords as an example. The Oslo Agreements have often been cited as a successful example of Track II diplomacy. The intensity of societal opposition to the peace plan was driven home in November of 1995 with the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzak Rabin, by a young Israeli Jew fanatically opposed to giving up the territories (Eisenberg and Caplan 1998, 103). The rise in popularity and power of the Muslim fundamentalist group Hamas made clear that there were serious gaps within both Israeli and Palestinian societies between those who supported the peace process and those who vowed to destroy it. As Kriesberg (1998) puts it:

The problem can be reduced by enabling more segments of the constituents to be informed and participate in the process of change, or having parallel processes at various levels. At a minimum, if the negotiations are publicly concluded and ratified, the chances of the agreement receiving continued support are increased (313).

While improved relations between the adversaries had made remarkable strides towards the goal of peace, relations within each adversary then emerged as the significant obstacle in sustaining progress in that direction. A problem that many agree persists today.

Several practitioners and scholars have developed overarching perspectives on the roles that citizens can play to help ensure prospects for peace. John Paul Lederach (1997), for one, offers a model that calls for leadership from top, middle to grassroots levels of society to address the respective and varied needs of affected populations (39). Lederach calls for an integrated, comprehensive approach and stresses how this “points toward the functional need for *recognition, inclusion, and coordination* across all levels and activities (60). Both Diamond and McDonald (1996) and William Ury

(2000) have developed systemic frameworks that map the overall collective *potential* of private humanitarian agencies, human rights advocates, and individual NGOs. An overview of each of these approaches follows below. Diamond and McDonald (1996) view the web of activities, individuals, institutions and communities that are the sum of state and non-state actors as a living system of interrelated parts functioning together towards the common end of peace (1). The term *Multi-Track Diplomacy* was conceptualized by Diamond and McDonald to refer to the diversity of actors and activities that contribute to international peacemaking. Multi-Track Diplomacy—as compared with First Track, or official diplomacy—is an expansion of what has come to be known as *Track-Two Diplomacy*, unofficial actors performing “a range of supplemental or parallel functions to help improve relationships at various levels and among different individuals” (Rasmussen 1997, 43). The Multi-Track framework charts societies’ various sectors—including the state; intellectuals and academics; business; private citizens; the media; and, religious leaders and institutions—and characterizes how each potentially contributes to the goal of peacemaking. The schema of Multi-Track Diplomacy was created in response to the variety, scope and depth of citizen involvement in peacemaking.. The underlying assumption in the Multi-Track approach is that state and non-state actors alike, are seen as integral and complementary organs of one complex system of peacemaking.

Finally, William Ury’s concept of the Third Side prioritizes the role that community members—people—can and do play with regards to steering conflicts away from violence and towards sustainable transformation. In answering the question: What is the third side? Ury (2002) says this:

There is an old Irish saying that goes, “Is this a private fight, or can anyone get in?” In this increasingly interdependent world...we seem to be learning that there are no private fights because they affect us all....[T]he third side is the community itself taking responsibility for its own conflicts. It’s the community forming what might be called a ‘winning alliance’ against violent conflict. It’s the community learning to serve as a container for contention, a container within which conflict can be transformed from destructive ways like violence and war, into constructive ways like dialogue, negotiation, and democracy (78).

From a Third Side perspective, the community includes any group or organization, official or unofficial, performing roles that serve to contain, resolve or prevent a conflict. Like a Multi-Track approach, a Third Side perspective places high value on how various sectors of society can step forward to perform these crucial roles. Yet, what is unique about a Third Side perspective is the way it includes and considers parties and entities who have a variety of relationships to the conflict. In this way the Third Side is made up of insiders (family, friends, and those who are the direct parties to the conflict) and outsiders (such as neighbors or other kinds of concerned bystanders). As such, the Third Side offers an important lens for understanding and defining the Compassionate Listening Project, which functions as both as insider and outsider to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Third Side shares in common with other citizen peacemaking approaches, the idea that peacemaking is a set of processes that requires the engagement of every dimension of society. This view is in clear contrast to the reductionistic, top-down approach of Power Politics, but is certainly consistent with the new conceptual domain of thinking about how peacebuilding is most effectively done in our world as it is today.

From the Actual World of Citizen Peacemaking

This study looks at one particular example of a citizen diplomacy effort, the Compassionate Listening Project, as a way to examine popular attitudes and assumptions about peacemaking. Importantly, some understanding about how this project is situated within, between and among other citizen efforts offers an important context to this analysis. Providing this context, therefore, is the variety of scholarship documenting the many roles that citizens have played in the intervention and transformation of social conflict in divided societies. In this regard, I have been informed by particular traditions of inquiry in the social sciences, as well as particular conversations about the role of citizens with regards to building sustainable futures. What follows is an overview.

Offering a key source of inspiration to this inquiry are the variety of ways that a grass roots people's awakening is arguably becoming an evident fact of our world (Walker 1988, Korten 1990, Schell 2003, Loeb 2004). The assertions of diverse cultures, the struggles for justice and dignity, the alternative development movement, as well as the variety of social movements are just some of the features of this emerging new landscape. In this regard, I believe that Compassionate Listening Project has location, generally, in this emerging new landscape, at the same time that it has specific location in the domain of citizen peacemaking.

Concurrent with the optimism often associated with citizen movements, I am also informed by a certain awareness of the dangers present in our contemporary times. Paul Rogers names this danger as the global insecurity that is a result of growing inequality and unsustainability. Already in 1988, R.B.J. Walker talked about

the sense of “looming cataclysms and barbaric injustices” that shape how many interpret our contemporary predicament (1). Importantly, Walker was writing to impress both a sense of danger and opportunity. The opportunities, from Walker’s perspective, are embodied in the critical social movements and the many grass roots struggles for equity, dignity and justice that have emerged from all quarters in the later half of the twentieth century. Echoing a similar sense of crisis and opportunity, David C. Korten (1990) champions the visions and strategies of citizen movements as a critical factor in our ability to build sustainable futures. As popular examples from development and international studies literature, these books offer glimpses into ongoing conversations noting the emergence of a global civic society along with its important implications.

Writing about NGOs as representatives of civil society, Pamela Aall describes the spectrum of nonofficial institutions working specifically in conflict situations—humanitarian, human rights, and conflict resolution organizations—and discusses what it is they bring specifically to peacemaking (Aall 2001). In her book, *Cultures of Peace* sociologist Elise Boulding (2000) describes how social movements around the world are making important strides in the development of a grassroots know-how for the cultivation of peaceful societies.

As participants in dialogue, citizens have worked to build relationships across adversarial divides and to transform enemy stereotypes in addition to influencing leaders. Efforts of this nature span a spectrum ranging from prestigious dialogue projects to the grass-roots people-to people movement. Religious organizations such as the Mennonites, Quakers and the World Council of Churches have played an active

role in conflict situations as mediators and shuttle diplomats. Problem-solving workshops offer yet another example of the roles that citizens have played. In this case, generally it is middle-level leaders “in a position to influence opinion” that come together to interact in a collaborative, analytical process about the contending issues (Lederach 1997, 46-47). Problem solving workshops were originally conceived by John Burton and Herb Kelman who were interested in applying social-psychological concepts to the analysis and resolution of conflict, especially destructive conflict (Fisher 1997, 56-57). Stephen Cohen worked with Kelman to develop the first prototype for the many problem-solving workshops that would follow. Since the early 1970s Herb Kelman has been conducting workshops with Israelis and Palestinians with the aim of creating the psychological conditions for mutual acceptance and meaningful negotiations (57).

In the period between the Second World War and end of the Cold War there are many examples of citizens engaged in diplomatic activities on the level of state relations. Of significance are the activities of the Dartmouth Conference; the Pugwash meetings; the Quakers; the World Council of Churches; and, the International Committee of the Red Cross. In their book, *Unofficial Diplomats*, Berman and Johnson (1977) examine such activities, the contributions to diplomacy as well as some of the ways that these roles have been perceived from an official point of view. The Dartmouth Conferences, for instance, are a series of meetings that have taken place at irregular intervals since 1960. President Eisenhower originally suggested the meetings because he believed that private citizens could be a helpful step towards official negotiations (41). Through the creation of a forum where exploratory

dialogue was possible, the Dartmouth meetings proved instrumental in informing our government of specific areas—the nuclear test ban and trade are two examples—where agreements were possible (49).

In addition to offering a safe forum for exploratory dialogue, citizen peacemaker's activities can influence government in other ways as well. Accomplishments of the Pugwash meetings offer an example of how second track—as opposed to the first track world of official diplomacy—activities can be useful for developing and trying out new ideas that eventually get adopted by government. For instance, when the Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament Conference met on April 8, 1962, the United States presented the idea of the zonal inspection system. This idea, originally mooted at one of the Pugwash Conferences, was a successful departure from a previous position (Berman and Johnson 39). The Quakers found a niche as unofficial communicators—“outside observers, interested amateurs”—shuttling between the various sides after the 1967 War in the Middle East. After undertaking a series of visits to the area they drafted and circulated reports of different attitudes and perspectives that, with the help of their reputation as impartial and well-meaning, served to dispel misperceptions in some quarters and keep communication flowing where it had otherwise come to deadlock (82-88).

In another example, the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs (CCIA) of the World Council of Churches (WCC), formed in 1946 has played a mediating role in inter-communal conflicts in Cyprus, Indonesia, Korea and the Sudan since the 1950s. Their modus operandi is lengthy high-level discussions that are supported by their authority in religious matters and good standing with officials

(Berman and Johnson 111-129). The objective of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is to protect all victims of war. Towards this end, the ICRC negotiates with governments and parties in conflict as an advocate of the victims of war. Despite the highly volatile and contentious context in which it operates, the ICRC has stayed true to its mission, defined by humanitarian policy, and has thus had some success in reducing tensions and facilitating a process of de-escalation of violence (142-153).

Further highlighting the role of citizens, Lederach's (1997) three tier leadership model—effectively a map or lens for being able to see the big picture of conflict resolution activity—emphasizes the importance of working with grassroots leadership. As he puts it:

One could argue that virtually all of the recent transitions toward peace—such as those in El Salvador and Ethiopia, as well as the earlier one in the Philippines—were driven largely by the pressure for change that was bubbling up from the grassroots (52).

Lederach sites a number of examples of programmatic peace efforts that have been carried out on this level. Among these are two examples from Mozambique. The Christian Council of Mozambique (CCM) launched an integrated program called “Preparing People for Peace,” which amounted to a series of seminars that hundreds of people attended. The second example is a United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) initiative called “Circus of Peace.” The project was a traveling show that used drama and art as a way to focus on issues of conflict, violence and militarization. Education and prejudice reduction workshops provide another example of the kinds of efforts that Lederach has included on this level of his conceptual scheme (53-54).

Offering an example of what Saunders refers to when he advocates for people-to-people dialogue is the Inter-Tajik Dialogue. This dialogue effort began in 1993 when a small group of Tajiks from different regions began meeting in order to end ensuing violence and to build the foundations for peace. Formed under the auspices of the Dartmouth Conference Regional Conflicts Task Force, and managed by a joint team of American and Russian facilitators, these meetings can be thought of as a significant achievement towards expanding the terrain of diplomacy to the unofficial realm of citizen dialogue (Kriesberg 1997, 56). Saunders (1999) describes the Inter-Tajik Dialogue as an example of sustained, public dialogue, where citizens can partner with government towards the creation of a multi-leveled, public peace process. According to this method, citizens engaged in public dialogue move back and forth through five distinct stages: 1) deciding to engage; 2) mapping the problem; 3) uncovering underlying dynamics and choosing a direction for change; 4) planning steps towards change; and, 5) taking action (27). The Inter-Tajik group was formed of a small group from different regions, nationalities and political movements. In its early meetings the group decided that its goal was to work to initiate negotiations between the government and the opposition and on fostering the conditions that would allow for the return of refugees to their homes. The group jointly produced a series of memorandums that were circulated among officials. These memorandums contained insights from the group's dialogue as well as recommendations of how to proceed (146-170).

Related to this outgrowth of activities is the surge of peace activism that arose in the 1980s in response to the Reagan Administration's militant foreign policy

(Lofland 1993, 10). What grew out of this era were citizen diplomacy efforts that sought to establish relations between ordinary people in the U.S. and in the Soviet Union. Whereas the peace movement focused primarily on the structural aspects of social transformation, these citizen diplomacy efforts were centered on the interior or relational elements of social change. This approach centers on achieving mass changes in perception or consciousness (53). In this regard, they sought primarily to establish relations between ordinary people in the U.S. and in the Soviet Union. During this period, countless groups of Americans traveled to the Soviet Union with a sense of responsibility and mission. Meeting with every stratum of Soviet society—from Politburo members to peasants—these groups believed that through the expansion of dialogue between the two countries at every level, they were laying the groundwork for peace between the two superpowers. As described more fully in the following chapter, the early roots of the Compassionate Listening Project lie here, in this arena and era of citizen diplomacy.

Theories and Practices of Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding

The very notion that citizens believe that they can take action to redress their concerns is one of the key factors explaining the rise or surge of any social movement (Kriesberg 1998, 87). In this regard, Kriesberg (1997) asserts that the rapid expansion of conflict resolution ideas and practices can be viewed as a social movement (58). Contrary to most activist efforts, which seek to redress the core structural issues at the base of a social conflict—again, the world *out there*—the conflict resolution *movement* can be characterized as focusing largely on the realm of human relations;

that is, the world *within and between* the parties in a dispute. As stated elsewhere, one of the reasons I was drawn to study the Compassionate Listening Project was because I became curious about the ways the project seemed to be attempting to address the structural and relational—the exterior and interior—dimensions of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. To approach the interior realms of the conflict, the project uses a conflict resolution methodology: Compassionate Listening. Importantly, then, just as I examine how the project, as a social phenomenon, is situated within, between and among other citizen diplomacy efforts, I also look at how the methodology of Compassionate Listening has location within the conflict resolution world of theories and practices. Towards this end, what follows is a look at the conflict resolution field in general, and human relations approaches to conflict resolution in particular.

Perhaps the most defining feature of the disparate, interdisciplinary world of conflict transformation and peacebuilding is its underlying optimism about the nature of human nature. This view stands in sharp contrast to the common belief that the human propensity for violence is a natural phenomenon. Consistent with this assumption, in the traditional world of international diplomacy coercive power is considered to be a primary ingredient for determining the outcome of a conflict. In this regard, conflict itself is treated as something to eliminate, manage or avoid. Indeed, the Super Power strategies during the Cold War sought to avoid, or *deter* conflict precisely through a strategic buildup of coercive forces.

Despite the pervasiveness of this assumption about the *brutishness* of human nature—the world according to Thomas Hobbes—the conflict resolution field offers an important challenge. Kriesberg (1998) articulates this challenge as such:

Popular thought frequently attributes the struggles among humans to be due to ‘human nature,’ suggesting our helplessness in stopping or controlling these antagonisms. If human nature is understood to mean what is intrinsic to humans, independent of their socialization, it is difficult to imagine discovering what that might be. Humans cannot survive without being nurtured and socialized in a social environment. Positing human nature without socialization is really impossible; it cannot be conclusive and must be quite general. (33)

If, as Kreisberg states, we cannot know ourselves outside of our social conditioning, then it makes sense to look for the ways in which our propensity for the destructive waging of conflict might be a product of our socialization. Especially since our human nature—whatever that is—lies outside of the realm of that for which we have arguably any control, whereas our socialization does not. In this regard, William Ury (2000) states that it is precisely “our fatalistic acceptance of destructive conflict as part of our human nature,” that is perhaps the biggest obstacle to developing our capacities to relate to conflict in ways that are more constructive (28). Applying this thinking to our contemporary world, Elise Boulding (2000) describes what this vantage reveals.

Current research on violence in contemporary societies suggests that high levels of aggression in the civil society are associated with recent participation of that society in war. The socialization for aggression involved in the preparation for and fighting of wars has subsequent effects on civilian behavior. In short, wars produce socialization for aggression as well as socialization for aggression producing war. This free-floating aggression affects the language and behavioral responses in political life, in social movements (including peace movements!), in sports, in visual and performing arts; and it affects the content and style of social reporting by the media. Characterized as the rise in the level of incivility and meanness in public life, it is being widely commented on in contemporary U.S. circles concerned with this development in their own society. (16)

In line with these conclusions, the field of conflict resolution and conflict transformation is built, therefore, on the premise that it is our relationship to conflict that is critical to the outcome of any conflict situation. The overarching goal, therefore, is to develop our human potential—personally and collectively—to handle conflict in skillful, non-destructive ways.

While it is safe to assume some general agreement exists around this larger goal and purpose of conflict resolution work, differences around how to approach the development of our capacities to handle conflict constructively further characterizes the field. Offering a map to these differences, Michelle LeBaron (2002) describes what she sees as an evolution of approaches to handling conflict. Her topography of the field in this regard outlines three waves of theory and practice, each with its own assertions about the roots of conflict and its resulting approach. An overview of LeBaron’s framework, along with a look at how this framework overlaps and intersects with other maps of the field is presented here as an analytic tool for giving location to the Compassionate Listening Project.

According to this map, the citizen diplomacy movement generally fits into the second wave of practices, otherwise termed a human relations approach, to resolving conflict. The first wave of practices addresses differences arising “from competition over resources and differences over material things” (7). LeBaron emphasizes how analytical frameworks and logical, staged processes are the modus operandi of this approach. Providing a key example are the problem-solving approaches that separate the person from the issues, and where *getting to “yes”* becomes the key measure of success. In terms of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Herb Kelman’s prominent and

well-known problem solving workshops, for instance, have been credited with preparing the ground out of which the Oslo Accords were possible (Fisher 1997, 70-71). In general, problem solving processes involve first and second track officials and non-officials and are therefore not a method employed by grass roots citizen diplomacy groups whose objectives have more to do with relationships.

Whereas analytic processes generally aim towards separating the issues of the conflict from the social and relational context from which they arose, the second wave of conflict resolution processes turns directly towards the messy domain of communication and social dynamics. Le Baron lists some of the desired outcomes for this approach as enhanced participation by all parties, better understanding, calm discussions and acceptable outcomes (8). Otherwise termed a human relations approach, this strategy tries to build peace by helping each side to see the human face of the other (Rothman 1998, 219). Further, a human relations approach to conflict aims at exploring and breaking down psychological barriers such as mistrust, misunderstanding and stereotypes, arising from a lack of contact and the systematic dehumanization of the other. In short, this approach tries to build peace by helping each side to see the human face of the other (219). A countless number of dialogue and coexistence efforts give testimony to the widespread acceptance and influence of this approach. In Israel, for instance, Jay Rothman describes the institutionalization of dialogue and coexistence work that arose in the late 1980s as a specific example of this widespread acceptance and influence (219).

A notable feature of LeBaron's analysis is how it highlights evolving perceptions and understandings about personal and social transformation, particularly

as they relate to conflict resolution processes. Importantly in this regard, the third wave of practices stems from observations about the limitations of these first two waves of practices. As LeBaron puts it: “Despite attempts to extract people from problems and promote rationality, more conflicts have surfaced, emerging out of unaddressed roots like nested Russian dolls” (8). Recognizing this, the third wave of practices is concerned primarily with worldviews. That is, with the symbols, perceptions, identities and meanings that give rise to conflict (7). As she explains the impetus for this emerging new wave of practices as follows:

[Conflicts] are bound up with stories we tell, the ways we order and structure our thoughts and our feelings, and the cultural messages that shape our perceptions...If we are want to bridge differences durably and respectfully, we cannot use a strategy centered in problem solving or in improving communication alone. We have to begin by acknowledging that our logic and common sense about how to communicate arise from our own ways of knowing—the ways we make meaning of our lives. These ways are influenced by culture, personality, context, and a whole system of knowing called our worldview (8).

LeBaron is advocating for processes that extend beyond established territory. Primary to this aim are critical, self-reflective capacities that can include the whole of any relational context (every one of those nested dolls). This requires informed and developed sensibilities about the dimensions of our differences, as well as skillful means. Two areas stand out with particular relevance to our practices in this regard: culture and religion. As a way to give dimension and substance to LeBaron’s framework therefore, what follows is a look at how each of these domains are stretching and struggling to establish third wave sensibilities and capacities as the norms of our practices.

Culture and the Politics of Meaning

Until now, I've emphasized the importance of acknowledging and responding to structural inequalities that result in injustices. Arguably, issues of power, inequality and justice are bound up in worldviews. Even for those who agree that the roots of social conflict are based in structural inequalities, many also contend that perceptions and beliefs—how meaning is created and assigned to actions and events—play an important role in determining how conflicts emerge and develop (i.e., Avruch 1998, Lederach 1995, Rubin, Pruitt, and Kim 1994). While influenced by Galtung's view of 'positive peace'—one which holds that peacemakers must work to eliminate the structures of domination and exploitation underlying social conflict—Lederach, for instance, also embraces a social constructionist view (Avruch 1998, 26). This perspective holds that while people may appear to be fighting over discrete *things*—such as land or resources—people are active agents assigning meaning to situations and interactions that they experience as conflict (Lederach 1995, 8). How parties emerge as a distinct group, how dissatisfactions are framed, and the actions that parties take in addressing their grievances, are all subjective matters pertaining to contested and evolving values, perceptions and interpretations (Kriesberg 1998, 58). In other words, while conflicts may be grounded in the empirical realities of people's social existence, this empirical reality cannot exist separate from any social context, and is therefore subject to cultural variations and interpretations (Kriesberg 1998, 44). The implication is that our practices, as well as our theories must be deeply

contextualized, reflecting both the empirical and social realities of a constantly changing world.

As citizen groups continue to emerge as viable peacemaking agents, intervening in inter-communal conflicts, the challenge offered by third wave critics is not only to develop practices that are effective in achieving goals, but also to design and develop the goals themselves. These tasks are at once practical and theoretical. They involve creating clearly defined visions of peace as well as the how-to steps for achieving these visions. Rothman (1998), for one, argues for the creative possibilities and opportunities inherent in social conflict. Similarly, Saunders (1999) sees citizens engaged in dialogue over matters of conflict as a hopeful expression of democratic ideals and values (57). And arguably, it is only through citizen action that democratic ideals—inclusive of the means for constructive, non-violent social change—can be realized.

Although, conflict resolution practitioners and theorists generally now agree that culture is fundamental to conflict and conflict transformation theory and practice, the relationship between culture and conflict has become an increasingly debated topic (Lederach 1995, 4). Differences exist around the degree to which culture can and should be taken into account. On the one hand, there are those who argue that culture is but a peripheral concern to conflict resolution practices. Critics of this view, on the other hand, are cynical about conflict transformation practices precisely because of the degree that culture has not been taken seriously. Highlighting these points of view—positioning them on either end of a spectrum—provides a helpful

vantage for looking at how the literature has defined the place, influence and implications of culture.

Expressing the skeptical view about culture's role, first wave, first track practitioner and scholar William Zartman (1993) is doubtful about the significance and relevance of culture to the practices of negotiation and diplomacy. As he puts it: "Culture is to negotiation what birds flying into engines are to flying airplanes or, at most, what weather is to aerodynamics—practical impediments that need to be taken into account (and avoided) once the basic process is fully understood and implemented" (19). This argument is based on the grounds that first off, culture is too vague and difficult to define of a concept to really be useful. And secondly, because negotiation and diplomacy are themselves universal practices, cultural differences are in effect irrelevant.

The Ignoring of culture, on the other hand, gives rise to a different concern. Avruch, Black and Scimecca (1991) open their book on the topic of conflict and culture with a story told by Meron Benvenisti, a prominent Jewish Israeli who has been a participant in American designed conflict resolution workshops. Expressing frustration with the degree to which conflict appeared to be ignored in his experience, he charges that conflict resolvers treat communal conflicts like a chessboard "where one can think up the best arrangement of chess pieces and move them all at once" (1). Describing an encounter with workshop organizers, he expresses his frustration over the experience: "I wonder if you know who we are at all. For all you care, we can be Zimbabweans, Basques, Arabs, Jews, Catholics, Protestants, Greeks, Turks. To you we are just guinea pigs to be tested, or at best to be engineered" (2). In this extreme,

the fear is that conflict transformation practices are overly ‘clinical’ and the individuals that they are meant to serve have not been considered in their full uniqueness and complexity.

Considering Zartman’s argument, Avruch (1998) points out that he is not arguing *against* culture, but rather “against the relevance of “something that is called ‘national culture’” (44). Paradoxically, Avruch asserts how Zartman in fact makes a strong argument for the power of culture by asserting the universality of the diplomatic world. Following Zartman’s logic, culture indeed matters. However, it is the culture of diplomacy that is the only culture that conflict theorists and practitioners need really be concerned with (44). John Paul Lederach (1995) points out how culture has often been treated as an aspect of conflict resolution—something which, for practitioners is a matter of advanced skill that can be *tacked on* to knowing the basics of conflict resolution practices. Lederach asks that we see our practices “as a project, a socially constructed, educational phenomenon comprised of purpose, process and content and inherently encompassing culture and ideology” (6). Rather than asking how we need to account for culture in our practices, Lederach turns the question around and asks instead about the cultural assumptions that are embedded in our models (38).

Zartman’s view about the universality of negotiation culture provides a case in point. The cultural assumptions embedded in Zartman’s view argue equally for the universality of human reasoning. Further unpacking the cultural bias upon which many conflict resolution practices are premised, Avruch (1998) points out that to depend on analytical techniques is to assume that “people everywhere *reason* the

same way” (91). Rather than seeing human reasoning as being “culture transcendent”, cross-cultural studies have shown “just how mutually entangling reasoning and culture can be (92). Even more to the point, writing about the practice of having parties “cost” the consequences of their continued conflict, he writes: “Now, it may well be that ‘costing’ is a generic human trait, though it certainly looks best suited to a Homo sapiens who is mostly Homo economicus” (91). While it may be true that all humans reason, what is not universal, what is cultural to human reasoning is the content of that reasoning, and how thoughts are prioritized, valorized and distributed, or networked, among individuals and across groups (94).

Those that call for more attention to culture, speak strongly for the need for greater reflexivity with regards to the theories and practices we develop and use. Importantly, in Avruch’s (1998) words “our ideas about the nature of persons, or the nature of human nature, end up determining the assumed ‘universals’ of our theories” (91). Seen as cultural products, conflict transformation theory and practice must acknowledge its own cultural *situatedness*. More to the point, that conflict resolution theories and practices have typically been North American, middle class and white has significant implications. Rather than being universal and culturally neutral, as Zartman would claim, the norms, assumptions and values that are reflected in international negotiation practices, for instance, are derived from a narrow but dominant sector of the world community. In this regard, Avruch (1998) makes note that programs to “explicitly train or socialize so-called Third World diplomats to function in the Western-inflected world arena” should not be surprising (45).

Commenting on a handbook written for “Third World negotiators” on the negotiating styles of “*donor*” nations, Avruch makes his point:

The “donor” part is emphasized because it reflects the homely homily about how those who pay the piper get to call the tunes: we can probably wait a long time for the International Monetary Fund or World Bank handbook advising their staff on how to negotiate “most efficiently” with counterparts in Haiti or Sierra Leone (46).

In other words, the hegemony of western-based conflict resolution practices privileges not only a particular discourse about conflict resolution, but potentially serves to reinforce asymmetries of dominance and control.

Offering another example, Avruch, Black and Scimecca (1991) show how failing to see the cultural basis of our models not only obscures the values and assumptions that are embedded within them, but it also blinds us to the presence and value of alternatives. Kochman’s (1981) research on black and white styles of negotiating shows how the privileging of certain concepts of personhood denigrates cultural difference and assigns it to the periphery.

This means that the white theory of negotiation is not simply one theory among a number of alternatives; it becomes theory for negotiation in general. The discourse of such a theory, which, conceptually speaking, is but one folk model among many, gets reified and elevated to the status of—if not science then—an expert system (5).

More than reified and elevated, this privileging of particular modes of being over that of others suggests that this ‘expert system’ risks becoming but another expression of western arrogance. Arguably, it was precisely the arrogance of this expert system that evoked from Meron Benvenisti a reaction of frustrated indignation over how culturally distinct actors come to be treated, in his view, like “guinea pigs” or “chess

pieces,” manipulated according to prescriptive, analytical models for resolving and transforming conflict situations. If we want models that respect and draw from the cultural knowledge of a people, then our theories and practices must be restored to their ‘folk’ status. Culture is the process of creating and recreating shared meaning. Conflict transformation models grounding in a respect for the complex, dynamic nature of conflict, would necessarily support multiple ways of being, encourage understanding of differences and facilitate responses to conflict which are context specific.

The Role of Religion in Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding

In an effort to offer a conceptual framework for understanding the broader scope of peacemaking activities on the part of religious actors, Sampson (1997) turns to writings by Quaker Adam Curle and Mennonite John Paul Lederach, both of whom have reflected upon their peacemaking experiences. A strong priority for justice among religious peacemakers, says Curle, results in a variety of approaches—be they advocacy, mediation or education—the application of which is dependent upon the distribution of power between adversaries (276). In this regard, Lederach explains how the efforts of religious actors—“*for justice’s sake*”—have gravitated towards activities that seek to empower weak parties and disenfranchised groups (277). In this regard, advocacy by religious actors has often taken sides on substantive issues in a conflict, with the goal of defending human rights (278). Furthermore, reconciliation work has often been pursued with the intention to restructure conflict relationships in

ways that address systemic injustices, thus building the basis for stable, peaceful relations (279).

Despite the wide range and scope of religiously motivated peacemaking, Marc Gopin (2000) argues that the field of conflict resolution has largely failed to respond to “the critical role of religion in both peacemaking and conflict generation” (37). In addition to religiously motivated peacemaking he refers equally to the serious levels of destructive conflict and violence, fueled by religious zeal, that has become an overwhelming characteristic of our contemporary era. How can it be, he asks, that we are experiencing an age of great social, cultural, and psychological uncertainty, fragmentation and upheaval at a time when the world has achieved unprecedented levels of global integration? Offering an answer, Benjamin Barber (1995) asserts that religiously motivated violence—*the holy wars of this world*—are ‘powerfully and paradoxically’ interconnected with the forces of globalization, which have become defined by consumer capitalist values (5). What does this have to do with the field of conflict resolution? Gopin argues that the field of conflict resolution theory and practice has failed to respond to the critical role of religion in peacemaking and conflict generation for reasons that are important to understand. In his words:

Here is the problem....It involves two separate communities of actors, both of whom are intimidated by the resurgence of religious affiliation and its accompanying power: first the diplomatic community and the elites of both government and the media, whose power depends on the continuing geographic and political integrity of the secular nation-state, and second, the liberal intelligentsia of the academy, who theorize about human and international relations and whose intellectual paradigm depends upon a humanist, agnostic set of assumptions (38).

Gopin is arguing ultimately that the field of conflict resolution must stretch to include a critical self-consciousness about the ways it is unavoidably embedded in competing arenas of power. He argues as well that by taking in all seriousness both the constructive and destructive trends of religion, the field can potentially expand its frameworks and practices so that it can begin to build bridges of trust across boundaries. A commitment to Enlightenment conceptions of human rights and civil liberties, do not rule out attempts at creating methods that are acceptable to those in the world who do not share a universal, secular moral discourse. On the contrary, to the degree that the religiously motivated conflicts of this world are a product of disenfranchisement, our Enlightenment values compel us to do just that. This view serves to reinforce the importance of third wave approaches which emphasize how the internal realities of identity and perceptual differences are woven into the external realities of conflict dynamics.

On Listening

For the most part, this study is focused on sociological aspects of the Compassionate Listening Project. I am interested in how individuals engaged with the project made sense of their experiences. Yet because the project is based on a listening practice, some attention to the literature on listening is warranted. This brief overview of how listening is figured within conflict resolution and other related fields reveals a kind of taken-for-granted consensus about listening's importance to personal and social transformation processes. It furthermore reveals how assumptions about the benefits of Compassionate Listening are echoed by others writing about conflict

transformation processes. At the same time, I found some evidence to suggest that listening is perhaps both under explored and under emphasized when it comes to peacebuilding and conflict transformation theories and practices.

The fields of Speech and Communications have given a good deal of attention to listening and its role in communication processes. Within this field, listening is regarded as a behavior, something that can be taught, learned, re-learned changed, and corrected, just like any other behavior (Barker 1971, Weaver 1996). Building on this, listening is treated as a crucial communication skill by mediators and interpersonal conflict specialists, alike. Considering listening to be an essential element of any repertoire of good communication skills, Wilmot and Hocker (1998) claim that listening underlies all productive conflict management (49). Mediator Brian Muldoon (1996) describes the act of listening as having nothing short of magical powers: “[Listening has] the quality of the wizard’s alchemy. It has the power to melt armor and to produce beauty in the midst of hatred” (90). Further attesting to the transformative powers of listening, Gibbs and Hartford (2003) describe the insight they have gleaned from their work in inter-religious dialogue and peacebuilding:

Being listened to and listening creates the potential for positive change, especially when those that are doing the speaking and listening have previously encountered each other as negative stereotypes and enemies (364).

Luc Reyckler (2001) links listening to dialogue, which he sees as an important element in ending violent conflict and peacebuilding (453). One of the key claims made by the Compassionate Listening Project is that listening can actually heal. Amela and Randy Puljek-Shank (2001) make a similar claim in their discussion of

storytelling and the healing of trauma. They consider processes that aim to heal trauma as integral to peacebuilding. In this regard, they link storytelling to healing, identifying listening as a key element in storytelling contexts, which serves to validate listeners (344). In all these examples, listening is described as an active process that, when skillfully applied, has enormous transformative potential.

A technique or process strongly resembling that of Compassionate Listening is the process of empathetic listening, which has been developed by Marshal B. Rosenberg as part of what he calls non-violent communication (1999). Rosenberg has developed communication techniques and principles intended to transform arguments into dialogue. A key element of his method is something he terms *receiving empathically*. More than listening, Rosenberg is describing a quality of presence that is unencumbered by preconceived ideas and judgements. In describing empathetic listening skills, he emphasizes how we need to listen for what a speaker is observing, feeling, needing and requesting (80). In response to what one hears he suggests listeners reflect back. This paraphrasing process, also known as active listening, is a commonly taught communication skill. In her guidebook on Compassionate Listening, Carol Hwochinsky (2000) calls this skill reflective listening, emphasizing how it can be used to encourage expression and clarify understanding (21).

In all of these examples the value of listening goes unquestioned, while there is little attention to the contexts in which listening takes place and how these contexts might serve to promote or undermine the benefits of listening. Further, even for those concerned with social conflict and peacebuilding practices, listening is emphasized as a personal skill that has the potential of producing personal or inter-personal

transformations. The link between personal and social transformation has gone largely unquestioned and unexplored when it comes to listening. Offering some insight into how this may be an important area for future investigation is Susan Bickford's work on the linkages between democratic process, listening, conflict and citizenship (1996). As a political scientist, she makes the observation that listening is oddly missing from contemporary democratic theory. She finds the omission odd given theorists' emphasis on shared speech as a practice of democracy (1). Because speaking and listening together enables democratic decision making, she identifies listening as a central activity of citizenship (141). For Bickford, the link between the personal and the political is unambiguous. She notes, for instance, how socioeconomic inequality can serve to block or distort what she calls, democratic listening (20). Not unlike conflict resolution and peacebuilding theories and practices, Bickford is concerned with processes that allow us the possibility for meaningful, respectful joint action on matters of difference and disagreement. Her treatment of listening as politics is therefore both instructive and informative to my analysis of the sociological nature of the Compassionate Listening Project.

At the Crossroads between Interior and Exterior Worlds

Approaches to social change that include the world within and the world out there are not new. The American peace movement, for instance, likes to quote Ghandi for saying: "You must be the change you wish to see in the world." While at the same time a nonviolent activist deeply committed to transforming the world, his philosophy requires a commitment to the inner development of *ahimsa* (nonviolence), as an important expression of our human potential (Barash and Webel 2002, 514-518).

Offering another example, the Dalai Lama has experienced decades of engagement with conflict through his tireless non-violent campaign to free Tibet, all the while contending: “Peace in the world thus depends on peace in the hearts of individuals” (Hunt 2002, 56). In the last few decades, an entire body of literature has emerged which explores the linkage between *inner peace* and *world peace*. Most notably, a bulk of this literature is grounded in Buddhist perspectives, which, through an emphasis on the interconnectedness of all of life, trace the roots of all violence to the internal states of greed, anger and ignorance that cripples us as individuals. From this view, we transform the world as we transform ourselves through awareness and compassionate involvement (Kraft 1992, 12).

Notably, my own interest in these topics has inspired my fascination and concern for this connection between personal and social transformation. Over the last twelve years, my interest in contemporary Buddhist philosophy and practice includes, in particular, an interest in a new direction of Buddhist thinking that emphasizes the link between inner work and social work called, socially engaged Buddhism. This interest has sensitized and alerted me to how the cultivation of certain forms of awareness and interior states of being have implications which extend to the *outer* realms of peacebuilding work, rendering the inner/outer distinction more of a practical convention than a distinct reality. Given this perspective, I have been interested to note the emergence of conversations in the conflict transformation field that seek to explore how the relationship between certain personal characteristics or qualities of presence might be central to various aspects of peacebuilding.

Building on LeBaron's observations about the field, are my own observations about the ways that practitioners and theorists alike are increasingly curious about more than the development of skilled processes that get us to "yes" and improve relations. The martial art of Aikido, for instance, is increasingly used in conflict resolution. Aikido masters teach body and sense-based practices that promote "self-awareness," "centering" and "groundedness" as helpful modes of being for those who are engaged with conflict (Saposnek 1998, Crum 1987). Similarly, both Michelle LeBaron (2002) and Lisa Schrich (1999) examine how employing the symbolic language of ritual can support transformative processes where individuals learn through their bodies, emotions, and senses. LeBaron takes this conversation a step further by describing ritual as "connected ways of knowing" and linking them to the heart of many spiritual traditions. As she puts it:

Connected ways of knowing are calls to mindfulness, bringing us exquisitely present with ourselves and each other. A sense of awe and wonder may be evoked as we are available in present tense to connected ways of knowing....Mindfulness is about cultivating our inner observer so that we become more aware of all parts of ourselves: physical, emotional intellectual, and spiritual (160).

Similarly, from the world of mediation is an article entitled "Bringing Peace Into the Room." Here, authors Daniel Bowling and David Hoffman (2000) argue that the frontier in the mediation field "begins with a growing awareness of how [a mediator's] personal qualities—for better or worse—influence the mediation process"

(7) To further emphasize their meaning, they quote mediator David Matz:

In addition to what a mediator does, there is the matter of what a mediator is. Spirit emanates from being, just as articulately as it does from doing. More specifically, it is the mediator's being, as experienced by the parties, that sends the message (9)

At the heart of all of these examples is an assumption that through a commitment to our own growth and development—often by drawing on practices offered through spiritual or so called wisdom traditions—we become better practitioners.

Exploring the question of what the so called “great wisdom traditions” might have to offer to the field of negotiation and conflict resolution is precisely the purpose of a new research and educational forum: the Harvard Negotiation Insight Initiative (HNII). The Insight Initiative forum is part of the Harvard Program on Negotiation’s Dispute Resolution Program and was launched “to engage the cutting edge conversation between the fields of negotiation and conflict management on the one hand and those of mindfulness and the great wisdom traditions on the other. On October 3, 2003 the Insight Initiative hosted “Beyond Yes,” the first evening of its dialogue series. In a high tech lecture hall transformed—ritualized—with the glow of tea lights placed at every seat, author, scholar and practitioner Bill Ury and author and Rabbi Marc Gafni had a conversation about what the world of spirit might bring to the world of negotiation. According to HNII Director Erica Fox, the starting hunch behind the initiative is that there is something profoundly spiritual about what we do as conflict resolution practitioners. Building on this, Bill Ury expressed his view that “the biggest problem with conflict is right here within our selves.” He went on to express how when it comes to the matter of our selves, the field of conflict resolution has much to learn from wisdom traditions. From within this full house of those who came to listen and participate that evening, came a questioning of Uri’s assumptions. Notably, one young woman asked how, given the degree of injustice, inequality and

ongoing violence in the world, can we afford to take time out to work on our selves. Uri responded without hesitation by saying that we need to do both. While perhaps offering a way through the tension around how to set priorities when doing social transformation work, what I heard in this answer was a reference to the way the field itself appears to be stretching in two, seemingly, opposite directions.

Importantly, just as conversations that seek to include the interior roots of destructive conflict, however this might be defined, are a newly emerging feature of the field, efforts to include ways to address the structural roots of destructive conflict are also relatively new. Illustrative in this regard, are the concerns of those critical of a human relations approach in general, as well as citizen diplomacy efforts and co-existence work in particular. Rothman (1998), for instance, calls a human relations approach “soft and naïve” to the extent that it assumes the issues under contention will disappear once each party sees the ‘human face’ of the other (225). Lofland (1993) is critical of citizen diplomacy efforts and their tendency to engage in disguised or timid politics (51). His concern ultimately is that the emphasis on idealism and emotional motifs results in political agendas devoid of substance. Of concern is how peacemaking interventions in arenas of protracted ethnic conflict may serve to reinforce social and structural asymmetries of dominance and control. In particular, Mohamed Abu-Nimer (1999) is critical of the limited degree to which most dialogue efforts address institutional and structural injustices (xviii). Within other areas of the field, the push for more critical, self-reflective practice is also evident.

In the realm of peacebuilding in divided societies, this push (and pull) in two directions can be found in the nexus of reconciliation, justice and coexistence efforts. Importantly, for those who raise concerns about a human relations approach, the central question is about the degree to which the restoration of relationships—reconciliation—is based on recognizing and amending injustices. Even while critical, Rothman (1998) still contends that a human relations approach may be useful especially at moments of transition from deadlocked, mutually exclusive positions to a more inclusive analysis of the conflict (225). Further, Lofland’s assumptions lack consideration for the fact that not all forms of political mobilization are constructive. In cases of protracted violent conflict, for instance, adversaries would likely assert that they are engaged in issues of political substance. However, in these cases the results have been an eruption of crisis and a destructive escalation of violence. Importantly, one area where conflict resolution activities have made notable contributions is in situations of de-escalating conflicts (Kriesberg 1998, 223). In this regard, John Paul Lederach (1997) asserts that in order to effectively address inter-communal conflict, efforts often need to shift away from the issues of the conflict and towards a focus on restoring and rebuilding relationships (24).

At the heart of this pushing and pulling around the revolutionary and resolutionary features of peacebuilding is what John Paul Lederach (1995) calls “the paradox of justice and mercy” (20). It is here, quite possibly, that the two ends of the field, while appearing to move in opposite directions, may come together. The paradox of justice and mercy has to do with the seeming incompatibility between addressing issues of justice, on the one hand—revolution—and prevalent assumptions

about the importance of rebuilding and transforming adversarial relationships—resolution—on the other. Inspired by his Mennonite tradition, Lederach (1997) defines reconciliation as a process of encounter and a social space where truth, mercy, justice and peace come together (29). As he puts it:

Truth is the longing for acknowledgement of wrong and the validation of painful loss and experiences, but it is coupled with *Mercy*, which articulates the need for acceptance, letting go, and a new beginning. *Justice* represents the search for individual and group rights, for social restructuring, and for restitution, but is linked with *Peace*, which underscores the need for interdependence, well-being, and security (29).

Kriesberg (2004) refers to a similar and overlapping set of features, calling them the four dimensions of reconciliation (83). As he points out, satisfying these different dimensions of peacemaking simultaneously is difficult (85). In this regard, it may be largely for pragmatic reasons that peacemakers may pursue one dimension of peacemaking, while neglecting another.

In a similar respect this paradox helps to explain the way approaches to conflict transformation are conventionally polarized around approaches that prioritize interior dimensions of peacemaking on the one hand, and exterior dimensions of peacemaking on the other. Yet, my observation is that, practitioners and theorists alike are beginning to think about and approach this paradox in new ways. From the margins of the field, there is arguably a growing consensus that our practices require from us that we learn to *hold* paradox, both metaphorically and literally speaking. In other words, our practices must be both holistic and self-reflective, recognizing and including the possible depths of human development *and* the span and complexity of our social worlds. It is significant therefore that theorists and practitioners such as

Lederach, LeBaron, Diamond, McDonald and Ury are holistic and systemic thinkers. As such, they are working to make sure that all dimensions and facets of society are valued and included when it comes to peace processes. Similarly, the work of Kelman, Rothman and Avruch are noteworthy for the way they aim to include the subjective, perceptual worlds of those engaged in conflict. Further, LeBaron's emphasis on self-reflective—*third wave*—capacities, like Avruch and Lederach's emphasis on culture, are each interested in expanding human capacities to include and consider the complexities of our social worlds. This growing recognition as to the importance of this inner ability to hold the breath of these two directions, may be what is driving the cutting edge of the field. In this context, that grassroots, citizen efforts, such as the Compassionate Listening Project are also exploring ways to *hold* these two directions may have further significance. At the genesis of this work was the hunch that this is indeed what they were doing, along with a hunch about the larger significance of this. In the chapters that follow, I report what I found.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS AND PROCEEDURES

This study was designed to contribute to what we know about contemporary citizen attitudes, assumptions and approaches towards peacebuilding efforts in arenas of protracted conflict. It stands to reason that studies conducted in the conflict resolution field are often concerned with outcome, impact and effectiveness. Had it been the case that I was interested in studying the effectiveness of the Methodology of Compassionate Listening as a reconciliation or intervention tool—as many of the subjects of this research would initially assume—these would have been probable and appropriate goals for this research. Instead, however, I chose to create an ethnographic-style portrait of the project, with the intention of illuminating the complex, compelling and problematic social world of these peacemakers. As such, my goal was to contribute to what we know about how citizen peacebuilders make sense of what they do.

At the heart of this study is an assumption about the importance of investigating differences in values and perspectives with regards to matters of peace, justice and coexistence. Examining the clash of worldviews between the Branch Dividians and the FBI in Waco, Texas, Jayne Docherty's (2001) research highlights the implications of such differences in conflict resolution processes. Using a similar qualitative approach, my study has allowed me to investigate the multiple perspectives—*the worldviews*—coexisting within a large, tangled, disparate network of groups and individuals seeking to resolve the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. In this regard, the Compassionate Listening Project serves as a kind of

nexus for several different networks and approaches. Seen as a microcosm of what goes on elsewhere, the Compassionate Listening Project, offers a window into the various conceptual handles that peacebuilders are using to organize experience and guide action.

Why Qualitative Methods?

Because I was interested in learning about the subjective world of my subjects, qualitative methods provided me with the ideal approach to this study. Qualitative methods of research are designed to capture the social life of people in all of its complexity, as they experience it. In contrast to quantitative, positivist traditions of scientific inquiry, qualitative researchers are interested in how social experience is created and given meaning. The word qualitative implies that the subject of inquiry is not examined or measured in terms of quantity, amount, intensity or frequency. Instead, qualitative traditions stress the socially constructed nature of reality and they are therefore committed to naturalistic, interpretive approaches to their subject matter (Denzin Lincoln 1998, 3). Qualitative methods are therefore based on the systematic and rigorous use of everyday ways of knowing: observing, participating, listening and talking in a natural setting. These methods of collecting data are more formally called participant observations and in-depth interviewing. The data that these methods generate is commonly termed as *soft*—as compared to the hard data of numbers, for instance—meaning qualitative data is rich (or *thick*) with descriptions of the people, places and interactions being investigated (Bogdan and Biklin 1992, 2). As such, this

kind of data is not easily translated into statistics. Rather qualitative data produces the sort of descriptive, narrative account that is presented here in the pages that follow.

Qualitative research has found rich application within many social science disciplines, such as education, social work, cultural studies and communications (Denzin and Lincoln 1998, 1). Notably, qualitative approaches are finding important application within the field of conflict resolution and peacebuilding, as well. As Jane Dougherty's study of the tragic confrontation between the Branch Dividians and the FBI in Waco, Texas so poignantly demonstrates, social conflicts generally consist of at least two socially constructed realities at odds with one another. Arguably, studies that deepen our understanding of the dynamic and specific nature of these socially constructed worlds offer an important contribution to fields of conflict resolution and peacebuilding. My hope in designing this study was to offer an additional contribution in this regard.

Why The Compassionate Listening Project?

From a certain perspective, this study can be attributed to luck, which I once heard defined as a combination of opportunity and readiness. When the opportunity came, I was prepared in several ways to take on this study. In 1997 I arrived at Syracuse University to study conflict resolution and peacebuilding in divided societies. In my background were an array of academic and professional experiences from which I hoped I could draw and integrate: I had been a Peace Corps volunteer in Morocco; a development professional in Rwanda; a feminist scholar investigating a grass roots movement in Sri Lanka; an intercultural trainer in Yemen; and most recently the Lead Trainer at an NGO Center working to build civil society in

Armenia. I take a two-dimensional approach to these concerns. On the one hand, I have been interested in garnering the big-picture knowledge and critical skills to understand and address the systemic, structural roots of conflict. On the other hand, my interests have involved me in educational processes that aim, among other things, to introduce life skills, expanding capacities and sensibilities in the personal and interpersonal realms. Further, since 1990, I have pursued an interest in contemporary Buddhist philosophy and practice. I am a long time member of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship (BPF), a member group under the umbrella of the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR). And, at the time of my Master's thesis work, I was active in the International Network for Engaged Buddhism (INEB), a sister organization to BPF. Notably, these interests have inspired my fascination and concern for the connection between personal and social transformation.

Because access is so essential to the success of a project such as this one, the opportunity for this study can be traced to when my path crossed with one of the project facilitators, Carol Hwochinsky, while we were both involved with civil society development work in Armenia. We would soon discover that, by chance, we lived in close proximity to one another back in our communities in southern Oregon. As is often the case with individuals who have worked and/or lived in other cultures, the Armenian connection sparked a sense of kinship that led to a series of social encounters. This was how I would first come to learn about the Compassionate Listening Project. In this regard, an important reason for choosing the Compassionate Listening Project as a site for my dissertation research has to do with the potential I perceived for building trust and rapport with the project organizers. When the idea for

the project first came to me, I phoned Hwochinsky, who, right away, put me in contact with the project Director, Leah Green. From the beginning, Green was very warm to the idea of my research. Soon after beginning my preliminary research, she articulated to me what she saw as the value of the study: “I consider what you are doing a gift to our project. We need rigorous feedback in order to improve our effectiveness. I don’t have time to take in the big picture. I’m too busy down in the trenches doing the work. I’m not afraid of the hard questions, go ahead and raise them.” Especially in light of the Green’s openness, my intention in conducting this research has been to participate and reflect with the organization, and, in another regard, to offer analytical feedback. (Bogdan and Biklen 1992, 227).

Preliminary Research

During the fall of 1998, and spring of 1999, both as part of advanced graduate seminars in qualitative research, I conducted a preliminary study of the Compassionate Listening Project. The focus of this research was the first Compassionate Listening delegation that took place in January of 1998. My objective was to build rapport with the project leaders at the same time that I familiarized myself with the project through learning as much as I could about that first trip. I took two avenues to doing so. First, I conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews with eight out of the fifteen delegates from the trip. Further, in addition to repeated phone contact, I interviewed Green and both of the project facilitators. The second avenue for getting to know the project involved watching forty hours of videotape. Traveling with that first Compassionate Listening delegation was a film crew who shot extensive footage of the listening encounters, plus short interviews with various

delegates, and the project facilitators. It was this footage that had just been edited into the half-hour documentary called “Children of Abraham,” which was completed and released during the timeframe of this preliminary research project. Through these two avenues, I learned a lot about the structure and feeling tone of the project in general, and in particular, about that first trip. I learned about the diversity of people’s experiences and some of the common responses to these experiences. I gained a sense of the range of motives for why people decided to go on the trip and what they hoped to accomplish. I learned about the methodology of Compassionate Listening; as it was initially designed, implemented and received. Plus, I learned where the group went, where they stayed and whom they listened to. The results of this preliminary study served to inform the eventual design of my research project and has continued to be a part my knowledge base about the project from which I can consistently draw.

Research Design

The goal of my research was to investigate the experiences and perspectives of those connected to the Compassionate Listening Project as they worked to promote peace and reconciliation between Arabs and Jews. Towards this end, my methodology was grounded in the interpretive, qualitative traditions of sociology. Drawing upon symbolic interactionism, I investigated how diverse constituents of the Compassionate Listening Project construct and reconstruct meaning as they engage in action (Blumer 1969). Proceeding inductively with my analysis, I have studied how citizens socially construct peacemaking through their words, behaviors and interactions. The use of qualitative methods has allowed me to investigate the multiple perspectives of the constituents in their full complexity, fleshing out the

intersections and divergences and weaving them into a detailed mosaic with social, political and historical dimensions.

When making the choice to focus on how different project constituents interpret and respond to the encounters and their experiences, I was aware that each participant occupies a particular location that is informed by the intersections of class, gender, religion, culture and ethnicity. Further, each has their own level of experience, knowledge, understanding and relationship to Israel and to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. A key intention with the design of this research, therefore, was to expose the constellation of these multiple perspectives and locations. In doing so, a much fuller picture of the values and assumptions that motivate participation and influence how meaning becomes attached to experience would be revealed for analysis.

Rich and varied data were needed for my purposes. In this regard, I relied on three key methods of data collection: participant observation, semi-structured interviews and personal and official documents. I will discuss each of these methods in turn.

Because what goes on during the Compassionate Listening trips is of central interest to this research, I traveled with two Compassionate Listening delegations—in November 1999 and May 2000—as a participant observer. It seemed important to experience more than one delegation, so that I would have some basis for determining what was idiosyncratic about each of the two trips and what was generic to the project. During each listening encounter, I was able to record (with a tape recorder or note taking depending on the context) the contents of each meeting as well as group

and individual responses and reactions to whatever was said and done. In addition to this, an important feature of the delegations is the ritual *check-in*. Usually once a day, delegates meet together as a group. A sectioned off lounge area of our hotel was a common place for this. Seated in a relaxed, informal circle, each person could take a turn and *check in*, sharing whatever was at the forefront of their experience. During these intimate group moments, delegates would process meaning, value and emotion with regards to each encounter and to the overall trip. As such, I considered these check-ins to be important sources of data and accordingly, I took notes and recorded these, as often as I could. Importantly, throughout all aspects of these trips, I had the occasion to *live* with the delegates, and thus to experience the fullness and intensity of what these trips can be like.

A second key source of data was in-depth, semi-structured interviews. In order to get a sense of how the project is seen and experienced differently by its different constituents, I collected interviews from the three distinct groups that make up the project: the Compassionate Listening delegates; those they meet with; and the project leadership. While actually traveling with the group and during the days immediately after the trip was over, I interviewed eighteen of the North American citizen delegates, often in the lobby of the National Palace Hotel in East Jerusalem, which was our base throughout most of the trip. On the occasion of both of these trips, I stayed in the region for four to six weeks beyond the timeframe of the delegations. My objective here was to retrace the steps of the trip, to the degree possible, interviewing the local project constituents that the delegations met and listened to. Similar to my immersion experience as a participant observer on the

delegation, here I had the opportunity to be immersed more generally in the cultures of the region. More specifically, these efforts resulted in twenty-one interviews serving to inform me about how this segment of constituents was making sense of their involvement with the project. I conducted several interviews with the project leadership. In addition to this, informal contact has been ongoing, serving to keep me up to date with project developments.

When conducting interviews, my focus was on how the various constituents—the compassionate listeners, the speakers, and the project leaders—were interpreting and responding to the encounters. My interest has been to learn how these various constituents are making sense of these encounters and the meaning they give, more generally, to the project and its activities. As I went into each interview, my own curiosity centered on questions like: What motivates participation? How did they become involved in this? What are these experiences like? How is this involvement understood in relation to other involvements? How is this involvement understood in relation to the overall conflict? What are the ways that self and other—in all their potential multiplicities—are situated and defined? While these were the questions I was thinking about at the start of the interviews, my intention, in each case, was to allow these questions to guide, but not dictate the direction of the interview. In other words, while I may have started the interviews with the questions that I had on my mind, it was the questions and topics that were on their minds that I inevitably hoped to discover and guide the interview process.

There are several kinds of documentation that I collected as sources of data for this research. Primary to this category of data is official project documentation.

This includes the project's web-site, the videos produced by the project and project publications, such as the Compassionate Listening Handbook, written and self-published by Carol Hwochinsky. Offering further data on the individuals and groups the project meets with, I also collected the documentation distributed by speakers about their work in the region during the listening encounters. Each participant in the project submits an application which includes biographical information such as age, gender, geographic location and professional occupation. Additionally, essays are included which explain why each participant desires to partake in the trip. I have copies of all these applications for the first four Compassionate Listening delegations. These documents are a significant source of data on the sociological makeup of the project and has been a basis for analyzing the multiple locations and perspectives of the participants.

The data I collected during the time that I spent in Israel, Gaza and the West Bank are bound to a specific time frame: fall 1999 and spring 2000. Together with that however, my tracking of the project in other ways—through ongoing contact with the project leadership and through the project list serve and web site—has been ongoing. While the layout of my data is concentrated in the months just prior to the outbreak of violence in September 2000, I have continued to track the project's activities since then. Based on this, I am able to make certain claims about how contemporary citizen peacemakers are making sense of their activities, particularly in light of the collapsed peace process. Yet, it feels important to note that this is not a study specifically designed to track attitudes over time, nor is this a study which specifically examines what delegates do after they return home from the trips.

Although my data provides some evidence on both these counts, this research is designed to illuminate the complex social world of this project, from the multiple perspectives of its constituents. Although one of the important dimensions of this social world is the contemporary context of local, regional and world events, this project is not designed to measure the impact of these encounters from a time sensitive perspective, nor does it specifically track the peacemaker careers of its delegates. As compelling as these topics may be, they are, in short, different research projects, requiring a different research design and different research objectives. The design of this project corresponds with my interest in the project as a more general social phenomenon. As a sort of nexus for several different networks and approaches to peacebuilding, I saw this project as a valuable site for investigating meaning. In particular, I saw it as a site for investigating how meaning around concepts of peace, reconciliation, justice and coexistence are embedded in context, and, importantly, how that in turn shapes perceptions and actions.

Informed Consent

Gaining the consent of the Compassionate Listening delegates to collect data while traveling among them was primary to my work. Prior to departure, participants were sent a letter informing them of my research and its intended objectives. Upon arrival, I introduced myself to the group as a researcher and again offered a brief explanation of the study. At the same time, I asked the consent of the group to use my tape recorder during the group sessions. These consciously designed steps to gain the consent of my informants turned out to be in themselves informative. Offering a clue

about how meaning was being ascribed to these trips, the option to turn off the tape recorder at any time during the group check-ins, was an option that was never used. The intensity of the trip, combined with the objective—that of striving to listen compassionately across differences—served to generate a sense of candid intimacy within the group. At the same time, other features of the experience seemed to reinforce the public nature of these trips. In this regard, my tape recording and interviewing were only some of ways that these trips were being documented for the purposes of sharing our experiences with others. Photographing, note taking and taping recording were common both during the group check-ins and during the listening encounters. During the November 1999 trip, one of the delegates—a professor of international relations—videotaped each listening encounter to be later edited for classroom use. Traveling with the March 2000 trip was a documentary filmmaker from Stanford University. Countering my initial concern that my data collection would be perceived as invasive or intrusive, by the end of my first trip, the group had affectionately named my hand held recorder ‘Hiam’ and adopted ‘him’ as the group’s ritual talking stick.

Throughout the life of this study, the informed consent of each of my subjects was acquired with a combination of verbal and written means. While I obtained the written consent of each person that I interviewed, as well as every one of the trip’s delegates, I would ask the verbal permission of the speakers to record our meetings for the purposes of my research. While these speakers had also been informed with a letter of introduction about this study, when I approached them at the start of the listening encounters, rarely did a speaker seem to have any cognizance of my

research. This finding, in combination with the casual attitude with which many of the speakers would offer their consent, would give me another clue about the relative meaning that these encounters had for the various constituents. Elsewhere, I discuss more fully how this finding helped me to differentiate the various speakers.

Noting the public nature of both the project and constituents' many roles, I offered a choice to my informants. They could choose to remain anonymous, or they could choose to be identified by name in my study. With few exceptions, subjects chose not to conceal their identity. Notably, I gained the unconditional consent to record all of the listening sessions, except one. While she did agree to have our meeting recorded, "for political reasons," a Palestinian speaker asked that her identity remain anonymous with respect to the contents of her talk. Commonly, informants would bracket certain parts of an interview, requesting that this portion be handled as confidential, thus anonymous data. As a result, the vast majority of informants are referred to by name throughout this study. Occasionally pseudonyms are used, as noted throughout the text. Also, in accordance with the wishes of my informants, I handle certain contents of my data and findings in ways that protect the identity of the informant.

Collecting the Data

The extended time I spent in the region was purposeful beyond the objective of collecting interviews. It expanded my experiences as a participant-observer beyond the immediate boundaries of the Compassionate Listening delegations. In this way, I had the opportunity to broaden my sense—geographically, culturally, socially and

politically—of the region. For practical reasons, I ended up based in West Jerusalem. (Both times I was offered places to stay by people who traveled with the delegations). Largely through invitations from those that I contacted to interview, I ended up mingling and interacting within the extended and tangled networks of peace advocates throughout West Jerusalem. In order to conduct interviews in the West Bank, I spent a week in Hebron staying with a Palestinian family. In Gaza, I stayed several nights alone in one of the few, small, tourist hotels in the center of Gaza City. To get around, I mostly walked and used public transportation. On one occasion I rented a car, which came in very handy in order to reach one of the West Bank settlements. For lining up interviews, I kept my rented cell phone in the same bag that I carried my tape recorder and my passport. Through these experiences my sense of culture and place was informed, deepened and expanded, which in turn of course has served to broaden my basis for analyzing my research.

More specifically, while in Israel I was able to meet with many individuals from diverse peace and activist organizations. This served to expand my own knowledge of how Jewish-Israelis, Arab-Israelis and Arab-Palestinians are framing various issues related to the peace process. My increased familiarity with the peace process in Israel provided a context for not only situating the speakers and what they had to say, but also for accounting for voices and stories not heard or told. When possible, I made contact with other peace building interventions in order to have some basis for comparing the activities, actors, goals and outcomes of the Compassionate Listening Project to others. Following First Track events on the peace process, as largely told by the media, informed me of dominant cultural narratives on this theme,

thus further providing context for analysis. All these efforts combined served to inform me with the macro perspective needed to contextualize this peacebuilding effort amongst, within and between other efforts.

My intention in gathering interviews was to collect a broad sampling from each set of project participants: the compassionate listening delegates and those with whom they meet and listen to. In the case of the Compassionate Listening delegates, this meant interviewing from both trips, and paying attention to differences within the groups. Roughly speaking, for instance, the interviews I collected reflect both the gender ratio and the ratio of Jewish to non-Jewish participants. Because their numbers were so few, I tried to interview all three of the Palestinian Americans who went on the May 2000 trip. In the end however, practical circumstances permitted only two interviews. Similarly, despite the thoughtfulness behind my intentions, in most cases practical circumstances dictated whom I finally interviewed and admittedly luck is thus largely to credit for any balance in my sampling. Due to the 24/7 pace of the delegations, it proved to be very challenging to conduct all but a few interviews during the trip. In most cases, the hours and days, sometimes weeks, between when the trip was officially over and when delegates left Israel turned out to offer a convenient window of opportunity for conducting interviews. As a back up, telephone interviews would have been possible. However, before that was necessary, I felt a saturation point with this segment of my data had been reached.

Decisions about how to balance the interviews I collected from the speakers provided a completely different set of challenges. First of all, the complexity of this set did not offer any easy or simple breakdown. For instance, it made sense to attempt

to achieve a balance in the number of Palestinians and Israelis I interviewed. However, commonalities and differences among peace activists—a matter of significant interest to this research—often existed irrespective of the Palestinian-Israeli divide. At one point, I tried categorizing the speakers according to those that were for or against the peace process. That proved difficult given the subtlety and range of discursive difference around how meaning is ascribed to peace and the peace process. In the end, I chose to especially target *the regulars*, those that are repeatedly featured on the project’s itinerary. For the rest, I would schedule who ever I could. As with the delegate interviews, availability and circumstance largely determined which interviews I arrived home with in my bag. On only a couple of occasions, speakers declined interviews due to their overwhelming schedules. Busy, international schedules in some cases made a few of the individuals I sought to interview, unavailable during the timeframe I was interviewing. Notably, language was another mitigating factor with regards to this aspect of my data collection. While the vast majority of speakers spoke to us in English, translation was used in the case of a few sessions. Due to limited resources, interviews with these individuals were not a possibility.

Categorizing the interviews into analytic sets, as I did, (speakers, listeners, and project leadership), reflected the key roles of the constituents, and thus provided a practical and useful way of approaching the project for the purposes of this research. Classifying my data according to these key categories of experience made especially good sense given my interest in how constituents of the project were making sense of their experiences. At the same time, I was aware that the neatness of this approach

could serve to reify distinctions in ways that may not be relevant to what is actually happening. For instance, not all constituents fit neatly into these categories. As an example, one of my *participant* interviews was with an Israeli woman who joined the May 2000 delegation during the Gaza portion of the trip. In 1999, this same woman spoke to an earlier delegation about what it was like for her to have a son in the military that had been wounded while fighting in Lebanon. During her interview, she spoke about both her experiences as a speaker *and* as a listener. Furthermore, in many ways, the project leadership are active participants throughout the trip and they speak of their experiences as such. While the categories have been handy analytic tools for handling my data, I've tried to stay mindful of the fact that that is all that they are, handy tools, and they should in no way serve to dictate how I interpret the nature of the empirical world I am studying.

On Subjectivity and Participant Observations

In my role as a participant observer traveling with the Compassionate Listening Project, my transcripts and notes are peppered with my own personal experience. Revisiting these experiences as sources of data, I've made some surprising discoveries. On one such occasion, while reviewing the transcripts of the closing check-ins, I learned that when it was my turn to speak, for both trips I had something similar to say. For most of the group, the final check-in is a time when reflections are actively linked to lives and identities beyond the immediate experience of the delegation. Typically then, the following example of what I shared reveals a

strong flavor of how I was openly processing my identity as a researcher, and how I carried this role within the group:

I'm feeling really emotional this morning. I've been thinking about how much work it took to get here and how much work still lies ahead for me. Compared to this experience of being with all of you, the other parts can be lonely work. In light of that, I'm feeling tender thinking about how much I actually look forward to hanging out with all of your voices as I'm transcribing and processing these tapes. It occurs to me that there will no longer be anything about what I am doing that is disconnected from knowing all of you, and I really like that.

Throughout the trip, at the same time that I consciously and openly acknowledged my role as a researcher, I was a full and active participant. As such, features of my personal experience resembled that of other participants in some common ways: I developed friendships; I got tired and sick; I openly processed a range of feelings evoked by the listening encounters.

In addition to revealing how I negotiated and expressed my roles as participant and as observer, more fundamentally my final statement at the check-in also reveals the philosophy of my approach as a researcher. Where critics of qualitative research might argue that the personal affection I developed for the delegates might obscure my ability to process my data objectively, as my statement suggests, the subjective nature of my experience was a valued and central aspect of how I collected and processed my data. In line with the traditions of qualitative research, I consider the subjective nature of my methodology a strength rather than a limitation. Traveling with the delegations as a participant observer, I directly and personally included my *self* as a tool of sociological inquiry. In this regard, the affection I developed towards the members of the delegation told me a lot about the

nature of the bonds that often develop through the course of this experience. More generally, when it came time to analyze the transcripts of others talking about their experiences, this analysis was enriched through the further recognition of my own experience as a source of sociological insight (Kreiger 1985, 320).

Theorists of qualitative methods, assert that when the origins of our inquiries come from our direct experience, our questions, our discoveries and our interpretations can be enriched by our subjectivity. In this regard, many argue the importance of including a self-reflective awareness as an important aspect of research, fieldwork and writing (Tierney 1994, Mohanty 1991, Smith 1987, Harding 1987, Klein 1983, Rabinow 1977, Rosaldo 1974). Paying attention to where we stand allows us to explore the world from an enlarged perspective, one that acknowledges how the position of the viewer affects one's point of view. Importantly, the concern here is for locating and naming social and cultural biases, values and interests. While often discovered and identified through personal experience, it is the social implications of personal experience, which are the real matters of interest. Relevant here in this regard, is my location and identity as a conflict resolution and peacebuilding scholar and researcher.

Significantly, I began this research with particular theoretical standpoints that have been influential to every aspect of this study. The decision to explore how citizen peacemakers are making sense of their experiences, for example, is grounded in a view that claims citizens have an important role to play in the peacemaking process, a perspective not universally shared. In a similar respect, one of the reasons I was drawn to study the Compassionate Listening Project in the first place, had to do

with a tension the project evoked within my own experience. As someone with a foot planted in both the world of activism and the world of bridge builders, I was at once drawn to the approach of Compassionate Listening and suspicious of what this approach might exclude. When I began to trace and discover how this tension was being expressed and worked with by various project constituents, it was this original experience that helped to inform me of this theme's significance.

Personal Identity and the Research Process

Various aspects of my identity and life experience serve to both support and challenge my role as a researcher completing this project. Given the intensity of emotion and judgement that can envelope those positioned within the conflict, I have considered the fact that I am neither Jewish nor Arab an asset to this project. On the other hand, having never been to Israel prior to beginning this research posed an initial challenge. Continually helpful in this regard was the knowledge, comfort and familiarity with Arab and Muslim culture that I gained from the two years that I spent as a Peace Corps volunteer in Morocco. Once conversant in the Moroccan dialect of Arabic, I was able to quickly learn some basic Arabic. This was helpful both in facilitating travel and building rapport with my informants. Finally, years of international experience have provided me with intercultural competencies that informed and enabled me as a researcher working in a cultural context different my own.

As a female researcher operating in the arena of a protracted, deep-rooted social conflict, I continually needed to grapple and negotiate certain aspects of my

identity. The first time I went to Hebron alone, due to mistaken directions, my taxi driver dropped me off blocks from where my contact would be waiting for me. A long row of merchants on the crowded street eyed me with hostility as I set out to find a phone. (The service range for most Israeli cell phones does not extend to either the West Bank or Gaza.) Given that Hebron is a focal point for settler-Palestinian tensions, I realized that my long skirt, fair skin and blond hair marked me as a possible settler. A quick exchange of greetings in Arabic with a storeowner transformed me into an American. This mobilized a block of suddenly friendly merchants who eventually chaperoned me to my meeting point.

My familiarity and comfort with Arab culture mitigated the vulnerability I felt as a woman traveling alone in Palestinian territories. Nonetheless, there were several instances where the cross-cultural, gendered nature of the encounters was in the forefront of my experience. On one such occasion, I found myself sitting across a desk, interviewing a Palestinian man in a seemingly empty office building on a back street in Gaza City. Although my assessment of the situation told me I was safe, I did feel both awkward and somewhat uneasy about the situation, feelings that I assume would have been different had I been male.

While my non-Jewish identity might have been an asset with regards to Palestinians, it turned out to be a liability in other respects. During the May 2000 trip, the women from the controversial orthodox settlement of Beit Haddassa in the center of Hebron, changed the stipulations of our scheduled listening session and at the last minute asked to only meet with the Jewish members of the group. Although, they did eventually agree to an interview with me, I was among the non-Jewish members of

the delegation that day who were unable to attend that particular Compassionate Listening encounter.

At the same time that some familiarity with Middle-East culture helped to facilitate travel and rapport building, a lack of intimate knowledge of the cultures of the region was a limitation in other respect. As a result, it falls largely beyond the reaches of this study to observe and record how cultural differences might be at play within and between the various encounters I examined. At the same time, in Chapter Six, I do speculate about how cultural differences might be a factor in the way the various groups are making sense of the project and their experiences. An article by Mohammed Abu-Nimer (1996) outlines some of the key differences between Western and Middle Eastern approaches to conflict resolution. Applying these generalizations to my findings, I am able to provide some insight into how culture may serve to influence how meanings are ascribed to experiences related to the project.

Throughout the process of conducting my research, my non-Jewish and non-Arab identity posed a noteworthy challenge in other ways. Largely with respect to the North American Jewish delegates with whom I traveled, I found myself quietly questioning my entitlement to an investigation into *their* conflict. In contrast to my newcomer and outsider status, the strength and power of the Jewish identity and narrative was often overwhelming. What is my relationship to this conflict? That is a question I would repeatedly ask myself, both as a way of reaffirming my sense of legitimacy as a researcher, and as a way of acknowledging the insecurities with which I grappled. The marginal status I felt with regards to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was compounded by a personal history that lacks a strong sense of cultural identity,

family or place. Raised largely as the only child of a single parent, it turned out that mom and I would relocate a lot. The sense of dislocation became familiar, preparing me for a life as an adult that would include years in cultures other than my own. Out of this history has grown a deep commitment to people's struggles for voice, self-determination and justice. When I first learned the concept of a world citizen, it resonated deeply, offering a way to claim a sense of connectedness to a larger world that I had come to love and care about. Yet, to claim the world as a source of personal identity, I realized, runs the risk of trivializing or dismissing the histories and experiences that imbue the particular narratives, such as Jewish or Palestinian. In response to this challenge, I learned to trust that I care deeply about the constructive resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as I do for the peoples of this conflict. Yet, I also learned to trust the awkwardness and discomfort that remained an element of my experience. This would keep me mindful that my observations may be missing much of that which lay outside my history or cultural lens.

Finally, it is a central fact of this research that I made the same journey as my companion delegates. As I worked to decipher and relay the experiences and meanings of these North American delegates, my own experience served as an important reference point. When delegates would tell me how powerful these trips were for them, for instance, recalling the intensity of my own feelings was informative. Despite years of study and related experience, this research provided my first real exposure to an intractable conflict. As I too attempted to listen compassionately to the suffering and courage of those I encountered, it left a deep and lasting impression on my psyche and emotional world. As a North American

researcher, I was aware of my own first world privilege, the privilege to look and listen, and then go home to a safer, more orderly place. Yet, what I had not fully anticipated was the degree to which the conflict would become a part of me. Whether it is through reading, writing or listening to news; or through conversing in the classroom, on the street or among family and friends my perspectives are now permeated with what this conflict has taught me about the breadth and depth of our humanity. Put simply, as a result of what I have seen of the human tragedy of conflict in general, and of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in particular, I am much sadder than I was before. At the same time, examples of resilience, courage, creativity and vision serve to inform my sense of hopefulness, respect and appreciation for our capacities to develop peaceful futures. The subjectivity of my own experiences has undeniably played a role in how I have read my data and given shape to this resulting thesis.

Culture and Context

While conducting my fieldwork, I was given occasion to reflect on the relationships between cultural context and research design. In particular, the decision to conduct one-on-one interviews was called into question twice with respect to culturally related experiences. The first time, I was in Hebron, where I was heavily reliant on the assistance of Compassionate Listening coordinator and long time friend of the project, Hisham Sharabatti, in order to meet with my informants. A key feature of the delegations are the home stays, where Compassionate Listening delegates spend one or two nights with a Palestinian family in Hebron. On this occasion, Hisham had taken me to the home of one of the host families to interview the head of

the household, Moshe, who has also been a speaker for the project. Based on Moshe's warm welcome and the giggling excitement of his children, I took it that my visit was a curious and special occasion for the family. They served coffee when I arrived and I sat visiting with Moshe, his wife, their five children and Hisham. After a time, I starting looking for some sign that told me enough time had passed and I could initiate the interview without seeming abrupt or impolite. Instead, Hisham suddenly asked me why I wasn't using my tape recorder. Their assumption was that the interview had already begun. Careful not to offend, I began explaining my research methods. At the point they understood, there was a flurry of laughter and a quick conversation in Arabic as the room abruptly cleared.

Once Moshe and I were alone in the room, he assured me that he understood how important it was to protect the "scientific" nature of my study. At this point he was more convinced than I was. Palestinian culture is often characterized as more collectivist than individualist. By proceeding with individual interviews, to what degree was my research being shaped by a cultural bias that was directing my focus in particular ways? One thing was clear for me: Had I proceeded with everyone in the room, I would have gotten a different kind of interview. Rather than how Moshe is experiencing and making sense of the Compassionate Listening Project encounters, I might have gained a more general impression about how his family and how the community—given that Hisham was also there—are making meaning from it all. Group interviews are often done. And in a sense my recordings of the delegation's ritual *check-in* process are a form of group interview. So it is not that I was contemplating a new method for conducting qualitative research. What this incident

did do however, was to provoke me to reflect on the cultural appropriateness of certain method choices in particular cultural contexts.

In a second instance, a similar situation arose where the choice about how to construct the interview was clearly out of my hands. In Gaza, at the headquarters for the Palestinian National Authority, I interviewed Ahmed Abdul Rahman, head of Arafat's cabinet. To get in to see him, I passed through two Palestinian National Authority checkpoints, where security guards telephoned in my arrival. I was personally escorted into one building and then put into a car and driven to another. In total I was asked to wait in three different offices, the last one was just next to Mr. Rahman's office where a Minister's cabinet meeting was taking place. As the Minister's left out one door, I was eventually escorted into his office through another. When I was invited to sit down in front of Mr. Rahman's desk, his personal advisors and two security guards sat with me. When I took out my informed consent form, all four men in the room reviewed it before it got a signature. His personal assistant immediately then took the form and made a photocopy for a file. It was clear to me that there was no negotiating this situation, nor would it have been appropriate to try. This experience illustrated for me the kinds of ambiguities that can be germane to the interview process, ambiguities around distinctions between public and private self and/or personal and political messages. As a man of public office, and a politician, anything he would tell me in a private meeting would of course be a public message. And, as a moderate voice within the Palestinian Authority, anything personally distinct about his message is unmistakably political.

What these two encounters have inspired me to think about is how important it is to consider that any interview—regardless of how it is conducted—must be considered in the larger context into which it is embedded. A one-on-one interview does not remove individuals from their social or cultural worlds, any more than a public or group interview would. Just because Moshe gave me a one-on-one interview, can I assume that there was anything private or individual about what he had to say? And more importantly, are my understandings of these distinctions at all relevant to how he makes sense of being in the world? From these questions I conclude that the context in which an interview takes place *itself* has diverse social meaning and respecting and considering this meaning is significant to the integrity of any qualitative research endeavor.

The Final Analysis

Metaphors supplied important guidance for me as I was conducting this research and as I approached my data analysis. While travelling with the Compassionate Listening project and while conducting interviews, I was continually asked about my research. People's questions would often reveal the common assumption that research involved either proving or disproving a hypothesis or measuring outcome. I would explain that what I was doing was more akin to ethnographic research, which generally didn't involve a hypothesis or the quantifying of results. What I told people was that I was interested in how the individuals involved with this project were making sense of their experiences. In that regard, I was collecting a mosaic of narratives that eventually I would lay out to read, like tea leaves from a cup. As I sifted through the volumes of data I had collected, this

metaphor stayed with me, continually prodding me to look for the story in the data. Complicating this approach was the fact that the richness and complexity of the many facets of the Compassionate Listening Project provided not just one story but many possible stories that could be told. My challenge then, was to decipher which story is the one that most needed to be told. In other words, reading tealeaves is not like reading the weather. Interpretation has everything to do with it. The reading of my data, therefore, has been guided by questions and concerns relevant to contemporary aspects of conflict resolution and peacebuilding theory and practice, particularly around the nexus of reconciliation, justice, and coexistence.

CHAPTER FOUR
NEGOTIATING PARADOX:
HOW THE COMPASSIONATE LISTENING PROJECT WAS BORN

Primary to an understanding of the project's complex, multifaceted nature is the history of how the project came into existence. Providing an important window into this history, is the story that Green tells about the genesis of the project. This story—located in the intersections of various cultural, historical, social and political strands—is more than personal. It is suggestive of the complex motivations and goals of a variety of historically embedded groups and individuals that are working to develop peacebuilding strategies. Similarly, other voices connected to the project further add to this reconstruction of the project's evolution. My aim is to address the three defining features of the project as outlined in Chapter One, from two, interrelated perspectives. By considering how the project leadership has been thinking and rethinking the core meanings attached to the project's goals and activities, I offer an historical portrait of the project from the point of view of those making the defining decisions. Second, by embedding this historical portrait in its surrounding social, political and cultural landscape, I offer a basis for reflecting about how the strategies, challenges, concerns and aspirations of those connected to the Compassionate Listening Project share relevance with a broader world of peacebuilding.

Genesis of the Project

Leah Green first started establishing connections in Israel and in the West Bank in 1982. She lived in Israel for that year while attending Hebrew University. As the war with Lebanon was raging, Israeli society was deeply divided for the first time about its military activities. Profoundly affected by the mood in Israel at the time, Green saw a direct connection between the war in Lebanon and the occupation in the West Bank and she became politicized as a result. Her involvements were many: she was active in Israeli peace groups; she started working for a Palestinian human rights organization in the West Bank; she followed a yearlong course in dialogue and coexistence at Neve Shalom; and, she started organizing Jewish-Palestinian dialogue groups at Hebrew University. Green also became passionate about the peoples and cultures of the region. At the same time that she embraced her Jewish identity, (working to improve her Hebrew and switching to the use of her Hebrew name Leah, from her Anglo name Lorie), she also studied Arabic and spent as much time with Palestinians as she possibly could. Green's father, a delegate on the fourth Compassionate Listening Trip in 1999, talked to me about visiting her for a week during these early days:

She was very into making friends with the Palestinian side. One of the best meals we had was with her in a Palestinian restaurant that was owned by one of her friends. And nobody else in those days was going into East Jerusalem. When we came out at night the streets were empty and people just thought you were crazy going over there. Walking through the Old City. Leah would pop into these shops on the Arab side and we'd get invited in for tea. She'd be talking to them in Arabic and it was just really a pleasant experience for us, even though there were difficulties.

Although obviously a willing, good sport during this adventure, Allen Green made clear when we spoke that at the time he did not share his daughter's passion for getting to know 'the Palestinian side.' Like most Conservative Jews, actively

involved with his synagogue, Green was an avid Zionist. As such, he was a strong supporter of Israel's perspective in the raging conflict, and deeply suspicious of Palestinians. Mainstream in these respects as an American Jew, Allen Green would come to represent a key audience that Green aimed to reach with the eventual establishment of The Compassionate Listening Project. The reasons for this are important to the story of how the Compassionate Listening Project, originally a citizen diplomacy effort *tout court*, came to include this conflict resolution component, as a second defining feature of the project.

Eighteen years passed between her father's first visit and a second occasion when Leah would have the opportunity to introduce her father to her Palestinian friends. This time he was traveling with his wife and their thirteen year-old daughter, all delegates on the fourth Compassionate Listening Trip. Much had changed during the space of that first and second trip. Outwardly, following the eruption of the first Intifada the overall conflict had given way to a peace process. These macro changes in the socio-political landscape were paralleled by changes in the micro, internal landscape of attitudes and perspectives. In tracing the history of the project, I pay particular attention to these shifting attitudes and perspectives. In a sense, that first and second visit to Jerusalem can be seen as flash points for reflection, signposts in an complex history. A key aim of this historical portrayal, therefore, is to account for the difference between that first and second visit as I examine what went on between them.

The Early Roots

The early roots of the Compassionate Listening project can be traced to the 1980s. During the same time that Leah Green was establishing her long-term relationship with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, a particular type of social movement was beginning to surge in the United States: citizen diplomacy. The backdrop to this period was the Cold War and the Reagan Administration's militant foreign policy. The peace movement was at its height in the early years of this decade, rallying around such issues as nuclear disarmament and test ban treaties. In contrast to the political activism of the peace movement, the citizen diplomacy movement was founded on an alternative approach to social transformation. This approach centers on achieving mass changes in perception or consciousness (Lofland 1993, 53). In this regard, citizen diplomacy efforts of this decade sought primarily to establish relations between ordinary people in the U.S. and in the Soviet Union. Throughout the 1980s, countless groups of Americans traveled to the Soviet Union with a sense of responsibility and mission. Meeting with every stratum of Soviet society—from Politburo members to peasants—these groups were motivated with the belief that the expansion of dialogue between the two countries at every level was laying the groundwork for peace between the two superpowers.

The Compassionate Listening Project can be considered a child of this early era of citizen diplomacy. In its original incarnation, it was a project of the Earthstewards Network, an organization established on the ideals of citizen diplomacy during the Cold War. The founder, Danaan Perry was once a research physicist with the United States Atomic Energy Commission. Distressed by the possibility that his work might contribute to the creation of more atomic weapons,

Perry left his job to study psychology and eventually devoted his life to citizen diplomacy work. Towards this aim, he was responsible for bringing numerous groups of Soviet citizens to the U.S. and American groups to the Soviet Union. These efforts were based on the desire, in his own words, “to melt the fear and prejudice that has often divided the people of these countries” (www.earthstewards.org/ESN-Danaan.asp). Embedded in this statement is one of the core assumptions of that era; namely, that people themselves are not the enemy, but rather our false awareness is. Eventually, these same values and ideals, would become the foundation of other projects in other parts of the world. Still ongoing today is “Peace Trees Vietnam,” a project that takes service oriented missions to southeast Asia, where delegates work with local populations—“reversing the legacy of war”— to replace land mines with trees. Oriented towards generating the conditions of consciousness for a more peaceful world—mainly through contact and service—these missions would serve as the model for the pre-Compassionate Listening delegations.

With the end of the Cold War, the original context giving rise to the citizen diplomacy movement had evaporated. The collapse of the Soviet Union gave way to dramatic changes in the international political order. World conflict would no longer be characterized by bipolar tensions between two super power nations. No sooner than a triumphant peace movement sparked conversations about a Cold War “peace dividend” hopes were dashed in December of 1990 when the United States went to war with Iraq, and George Bush triumphantly announced the New World Order (Chomsky 2001, 13). Already during the Gulf crisis, the Bush administration indicated repeatedly that the Arab-Israel conflict would be the administration’s next

priority (Gerner 1994, 180). The United States victory in the Gulf War thus paved the way for a U.S. brokered peace process between Israelis and Palestinians.

In line with these shifting political tides, Parry saw the Middle East as the next frontier for the citizen diplomacy movement. In 1990, just prior to the Gulf War, Earthstewards had organized its first citizen diplomacy mission to the region. Both residents of Bainbridge Island, Washington, Leah Green and Danaan Parry met for dinner one night and she took a look at the itinerary he had planned. Here is how she tells it:

He knew two Palestinians in the West Bank. That's it...I said, 'Well, listen. I just happen to have lived over there for a couple years. I'm pretty connected. I worked in the peace movement for a while. I'd be happy to at least give you a good experience and connect you to everyone.'

This is what Green did. Proving herself an invaluable resource during the trip, in the end, Perry handed Green the program. As Green puts it, "he basically handed me the reins to my life work!"

For the course of the next seven years, Green would take a couple of groups a year under the auspices of the Earthstewards Network. She described these early missions as "straight citizen diplomacy: just taking anybody and everybody that wanted to come and just going in and really exposing people to everyone." *Everyone and anyone*, however, turned out to be individuals who were largely secular, from the political left and who had an interest in the conflict. During a time when efforts to initiate and sustain dialogue with Palestinians were both controversial and in many cases illegal and dangerous, Green was leading these North American groups across the Green line into the West Bank (Golan and Kamal 1999, 199).

From the beginning, Green was convinced of the power of these trips for herself, for the participants and for those that they would meet with. In an article published in “Yes” magazine, Green describes one of the early encounters that happened spontaneously while walking through a refugee camp:

It’s 1991. The first Intifadah is raging. A group of Americans walks quietly through the twisted alleys of al-Fawwar refugee camp near Hebron. We can hear Israeli soldiers moving through the other side of the camp. We turn a corner and come upon a middle-aged Palestinian woman picking through rubble. Our host explains to her that we have come to listen to the people of Israel and Palestine—to see the situation firsthand and listen to their stories.

As our host translates, we learn that until recently, the pile of rubble was her home. She cries with rage as she tells us that her youngest son was shot and killed by the Israeli army and her oldest son has just been sentenced to life in prison by a military court. After the sentence was handed down, her home was bulldozed. She and her two daughters are left with only the makeshift shed that housed their animals. The woman begins to wail: ‘Why do Americans hate us? What have we done to you? We’ve lost everything! We are just struggling to survive...’ We stand in shock as she continues to give voice to her anger and her grief.

Then, quite unexpectedly, she takes out a handkerchief, wipes her eyes, and invites us inside her shed for tea. We sit with her on her dirt floor, drinking watered down, sweet tea, and begin to listen to one another. This was the participants’ first awareness that many Palestinians believed the United States was waging war on them. (Yes, Winter 2001/2002).

More than a simple evocation of the “power” of these encounters, Green’s portrayal illustrates what she saw as noteworthy about the trips. The emphasis is on how participants are exposed to the lived realities, concerns and perspectives of those experiencing the day to day tragedy of the conflict. Further, participants are exposed to perspectives that serve to directly implicate them in the conflict. In other words, the trip informs participants in ways that challenge existing narratives about the conflict and their relationship to it, an agenda potentially providing a basis for action.

Seen in this light, the agenda of these pre-Compassionate Listening missions have political and philosophical implications that extend beyond the original conception of the citizen diplomacy movement of the Cold War. The earlier parent movement placed an emphasis on the internal shifts in perception and consciousness that would result from people-to-people encounters, while declaring that this was decidedly non-political. In his book about the American Peace Movement of the 1980s, John Lofland is critical of what he calls their “polite strategies,” asserting that the emphasis on idealism and emotional motifs resulted in “disguised” or “polite” political agendas devoid of substance. In contrast, as a result of the politically charged nature of these “straight citizen diplomacy” trips Green would soon find herself grappling with this charged landscape and the unanticipated consequences of these trips. These consequences, and in particular how she responds to them, become important to the future of the project. Furthermore, they are suggestive of certain evolving perceptions, beliefs and assumptions about the nature of social conflicts and about how best to work to resolve them.

Citizen Diplomacy

A good portion of the participants that ended up going on these early trips—most of them secular, and without a strong relationship to Zionism, according to Green—were hardly representative of the mainstream American Jewish population, which was staunchly Zionist in its support of Israel. Green noted, nonetheless, that these trips were especially powerful for the Jewish participants as they tugged at the fragmented and often discarded roots of their identities. From this observation, in the

beginning Green began envisioning a key aspect of the future of the project: she wanted to attract mainstream Jews, individuals who were deeply invested in their Judaism. Although she would have success with this agenda, she would then very quickly reverse this decision, orienting the project instead to recruit from a more general population of constituents with mixed backgrounds. The shifts in her thinking are indicative of the organic nature of the project and the iterative process through which Green is thinking about the project and making decisions. Tracing this iterative process reveals the evolving nature of the questions and concerns that Green was prioritizing and with which she was grappling.

Green's original desire to recruit from mainstream Jewish communities was in response to observations Green made about the effect of these delegations on the participants. It was troubling for Green that individuals would come away from her trips with anti-Israeli and pro-Palestinian sentiments. At the same time that it was important for her to expose people to the injustices experienced by the Palestinians, part of the problem, as she saw it, was the polarization that characterized the conflict. Instead of being helpful, she feared that her efforts were instead contributing to the problem. She expressed the problem in this way:

Bringing so many people through...I mean, I used to feel horrible after some trips because I try to stay out of it and I try to just connect people to everybody and let them come to their own conclusions. But what kept happening was people were coming away just feeling so angry at Israel, Israelis and Jews, and so sympathetic to the Palestinians that I didn't know for a while if I was doing a disservice to the whole situation.

Rather than healing the divisions that were at the root of the conflict, by inciting anger and blame, Green was concerned that she was aggravating these divisions. The

problem here is one of inclusion and it is at the heart of what many conflict resolution strategies strive to overcome. Commonly, when exposed to competing narratives in a conflict, what occurs is either a rejection of one's own story or the rejection of the other's. This can be seen as a product of the way that disputes generally "storied" in ways that are limited (Cobb 1993, 250). Green was struggling to elicit a response that would transcend this dualism, to expand the way in which the conflict was being storied. Another way of expressing the question I heard her grappling with is like this: How could she continue exposing North Americans to the lived realities of the conflict in a way that would evoke a sense of interest, regard and care for all parties to the conflict?

For Green, part of the answer to this dilemma would be in offering the trips to individuals who were connected to their Jewish communities and for whom their Jewish identities were a big part of their lives. She expressed why she saw this as so important:

Because they would have to grapple with this situation and come to terms with it. They would not become anti-Israeli. They would not become anti-Semitic or pro-Palestinian. They wouldn't see it in black and white, they would struggle with it. And this issue is not black and white. I began to feel that this was a Jewish issue for America, more than anybody else. And if I could lead people in to really struggle with it, they wouldn't just say 'This is pathetic. Jews are oppressing others. I can't be Jewish any more.' I knew it would be really difficult for them, but those were the people that I started to dream about reaching.

Early on, Green dismissed this dream of recruiting from mainstream Jewish communities as a "pie in the sky" dream. She assumed that the people that she was trying to reach didn't want to be reached. In the early days of the Earthsteward's missions there was a lot in place to support this conclusion. Until the Oslo Accord

was signed in 1993, it was still illegal for Israelis to meet with members of the PLO. Characteristically, American Jewish sentiment has generally been to the right of Israel's center. With this in mind, it would be hard to imagine large numbers of American Jews flocking to cross the Green line.

As political sentiments about the conflict began to change in Israel, it also began to shift in the United States. In 1987 with the outbreak of the Intifada, Israelis and mainstream American Jews alike saw the ugly face of the Israeli occupation. They saw Israeli soldiers breaking the bones of Palestinians on television for the first time, and they were shocked that Israelis could be doing this. Up until 1993, Green describes what it was like when she would give talks about her experiences in the region and then how suddenly the mood shifted:

When I used to give talks, right wing, pro-Israeli people would come to heckle and stuff. And I always had to deal with those people. And people would stand up and say, 'She's on Arafat's payroll. Don't listen to her' Things like that. Over night, I became the mainstream! Over night I was saying the same thing as Yitzak Rabin, the Prime Minister of Israel. And so the twists of fate!

After the signing of the Oslo Accords, not only did it become possible for Green to reach a mainstream Jewish population, but she suddenly also perceived that she was offering a service that could not be found elsewhere.

So for the first time after that in 1993, it really became possible for me to reach mainstream Jews without them thinking that they were gonna be a traitor. So everything just kind of fell into place and my dreams came true. And I realized that they don't have invitations. They don't have options for coming in a way that isn't anti-Israel or that's not an anti-Israel experience or outcome.

A common theme among Jewish participants echoes this sentiment. Repeatedly, participants speak about feeling troubled in their relationship with Israel. Many have

stayed away for years, sometimes decades because, as many of them put it, they could not find a “responsible” way to come. Perhaps more than anything else, the Compassionate Listening Project has come to represent, for the individuals who go on these trips—Jews and non-Jews alike—just that, a responsible way to go to Israel and engage with what is happening on the ground in the region.

Importantly, Green was navigating a sensitive divide that exists within the peace movement in general, and within the Jewish community in particular. John Lofland’s (1993) critique about the Cold War citizen diplomacy movement— *the emphasis on idealism and emotional motifs resulted in agendas devoid of political substance*—is telling in this regard. John Lofland writes as both an academic scholar and an activist deeply involved with the peace movement during this era. Agendas of *political substance* during that time were infused with large doses of anti-imperialist discourse. The post-Cold War peace movement has not been any different. It is openly critical of the United States’ foreign policy and its long track record of support for oppressive, anti-democratic regimes. In the case of Israel, opposition to Israel’s occupation in the Palestinian territories, and outrage against Israel’s human rights violations is the standard line. The United States’ military support of Israel is often cited as a negative factor in the ongoing struggle. Sympathy for the plight of the Palestinians, along with support for the Palestinian nationalist struggle is another common theme within the movement. In contrast, the peace movement in Israel is deeply divided between those who align with the critical anti-imperialist perspectives of the international peace movement, and those who stand in alliance with Israel. Similarly, within the United States, the mainstream Jewish community has largely

taken a defensive stance against a peace movement that it perceives as pro-Palestinian, thus undermining to Israel's security and survival. By adopting Compassionate Listening as the guiding framework for these trips, Green may have intuitively stumbled on a way to through the morass of political and ideological differences and structured a discursive space, acceptable to a diverse range of constituents in the conflict for speaking about their experience. The adoption of Compassionate Listening adds a new dimension to the trip: suddenly these delegations become shaped by a methodology that is claimed to be a tool for building peace and reconciliation between Arabs and Jews.

Compassionate Listening

The history of how Compassionate Listening, as a methodology or tool, came to be adopted and integrated into the project's framework and format, adds further dimension to the complex social world of this project. The eventual move to adopt the methodology of Compassionate Listening as the guiding framework for the trips, became Green's way out of the conundrum she was experiencing both personally and as the director of these missions. As someone informed by the critical perspectives of the international peace movement, she believed that exposing and informing people—in this case Americans, and in particular Jewish Americans—to the day to day injustices of the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict would offer an important contribution to the transformation of the struggle. Yet, as a Jewish American with an expressed love for Israel, she experienced the process of doing this as problematic. In particular, Green reflects about how her own anger, and the anger of the participants

became something she saw as needing to be addressed and how Compassionate Listening, as a methodology, became her answer as to how to do that. Describing her pre-compassionate listening trips, she says:

Well, I know that some people were coming out of my pre-compassionate listening trips really angry. And, this is one thing that motivated me to do the compassionate listening. I think it was a reflection of where I was at. I was really angry at Israelis. And I knew I needed this for myself. It started scaring me when I began seeing people who graduated from my trips mirror back to me this kind of outrage that went beyond....It seemed really anti-Semitic to me. And I just went ‘Uh oh! That’s not helping.’

Similar to Green, academic scholar and practitioner John Paul Lederach identifies himself as someone with a foot in both activist and peacemaker camps. He addresses the limits and the value of activism in a way that echoes Green’s concern. Activism’s adversarial strategies can heat up conflicts in destructive ways. At the same time, he acknowledges how peacemakers often build on the work of activists who, precisely through agitating social tensions, have cultivated an acute awareness of the issues at the base of the conflict (Lederach 1995, 12).

Looking for a way to address her dilemma, Green ended up reconnecting with both individuals and ideals with roots in the Cold War citizen diplomacy movement. She came across a small pamphlet entitled “Pieces of the Mideast Puzzle: Israelis and Palestinians” (1991) written by a woman named Gene Knudson Hoffman. This pamphlet outlined Hoffman’s vision of something that she was calling “Compassionate Listening” and what this might offer to the ongoing struggle between Israelis and Palestinians. Hoffman had been an active member of the interfaith nonviolent movement, the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR), since 1951. Along with the many other Cold War citizen diplomats of the era, she had worked during the

1980s “to put a human face on the Soviets,” as her own words put it. More specifically, she worked to create a US/USSR Reconciliation Program for FOR in 1983. Since the end of the Cold War, Hoffman became another Cold War citizen diplomat who had turned her attention towards the Middle East. In April 1990, she went to Israel and to the occupied territories as a short-term member of a FOR project called: “Mideast Witness.” Later that year she returned to the region, this time on her own, in order to interview spokespersons for Israeli government policy toward Palestinians. Pax Christi USA would publish the results of this *listening* trip in 1991, as part of their Just World Order Series publications.

In 1991, she presented a proposal for a Compassionate Listening Project to the International Fellowship of Reconciliation. This proposal builds on many years of working to develop the concept of listening as a reconciliation process. Her efforts were finally attracting some attention. A modified version of this proposal was called “The Libyan Listening Project.” Working with her to develop the Libyan project were Adam Curle, senior Quaker, author and president of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship in England; and, Herb Walters, founder of the Rural Southern Voice for Peace (RSVP). Also, attracted to what this approach could add to the project, Green made contact with Hoffman.

While still with Earthstewards, Green and Hoffman began to dialogue about the possible role of compassionate listening as a tool for conflict transformation. As a result of their conversations, Hoffman decided to travel with a delegation. This was in 1996. Also aboard with this particular trip were two women who would eventually approach Green and offer to provide the facilitation and training in compassionate

listening for future trips. Hoffman, being in her late 70s, was not interested in taking on the project herself. Giving her endorsement and blessings to the new initiative, she has served as a member of the project's Advisory Board ever since. The two women who approached Green were Carol Hwochinsky and Lorissa Keats. Eventually, Hwochinsky and Keats (both with a history of involvement in the Cold War citizen diplomacy movement, as described below) put together a training program that was launched as the first Compassionate Listening delegation in January of 1998. Hwochinsky has been with the project ever since, travelling with almost every delegation. Following this first trip, Keats, like Hoffman, would assume more of a background role with the project through becoming a member of the Advisory Board.

The integration of Compassionate Listening as a guiding format and framework for these citizen diplomacy delegations was, in a sense, an experiment. Like Green, the project facilitators and trainers brought to this initiative a combination of skills and experiences that are embedded in historical, social and cultural contexts. Friends and colleagues for many years, both Keats and Hwochinsky were therapists by profession, who had actively cultivated an interest in conflict resolution. Further, both were long-time members of "Foundation for Global Community," a volunteer-based organization that dates back to the early citizen diplomacy efforts in the Soviet Union. In that capacity, both had worked on a South Caucasus project called "The Armenia-Azerbaijan Initiative." This project was aimed to assist influential moderates in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and the Nagorno-Karabak region in a non-governmental public peace process of face-to-face dialogue.

At this juncture, the intersection of biography and social structure includes how, in my capacity as a professional working to develop civic society in the former Soviet Union, I made contacts that would eventually introduce me to the Compassionate Listening project. As an employee of a USAID funded project between the years 1995 and 1997, my work was part of a plethora of efforts that were aimed to support and assist the former Soviet Union in its transition towards the development of democratic structures and institutions. Ideas about the value of grassroots participatory processes are part of what fueled this wave of activities and projects. Included here are ideas that link citizen dialogue and action with peacebuilding. Suggesting the degree to which these ideas, along with certain forms of citizen diplomacy work, had become part of the mainstream, my work at the Armenian NGO Center was based on the unilateral funding of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). In a similar regard, the Armenia-Azerbaijan initiative, received its funding from a number of institutions and foundations that include The Eurasia Foundation; United States Institute for Peace; The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation; and the Winston Foundation for World Peace. To various degrees, both of these projects, can be understood to represent how, since the end of the Cold War, the world of international diplomacy and peacemaking, has been expanding to include an increasing number and variety of non-state actors. Citizen efforts, like the Compassionate Listening Project, grew out of this context and its expanding theoretical and practical terrain.

At the heart of the differences between the Cold War citizen diplomacy movement and the activist peace movement is a battle over priorities for social

change. While the activist peace movement stresses the need for addressing the structural roots of conflict, the citizen diplomacy movement would stress the need to work for the transformation of individual hearts and minds. Hoffman expresses this tension as she talks about how her vision for Compassionate Listening grew from a frustration she had experienced in her many years with the peace movement.

For most of my forty years with the peace movement, I felt that something was missing, something was out of harmony. Somehow we peace people, who wanted no enemy, always seemed to have one. In our country, it's been mostly our government. But there were the Nazis, the anti-communists, the military-industrial complex, the torturers, the contras—and most recently, the Israelis.

Sometime ago I recognized that terrorists were people who had grievances, who thought their grievances would never be heard, and certainly never addressed. Later I saw that all parties to the conflict were wounded, and at the heart of every act of violence is an unhealed wound. (Hoffman 2001, 9)

Frustrated with the adversarial nature of collective grievances, the resulting model for Compassionate Listening is grounded in a perspective that prioritizes the psychological bases of conflict—the unhealed wound—within individuals.

Carol Hwochinsky has been largely responsible for developing Compassionate Listening as a process and practice within the context of the Compassionate Listening Project. In the early part of 2001, MidEast Citizen Diplomacy published a handbook on Compassionate Listening, “Listening with the Heart,” which is authored by Carol. As an integral part of the project, it is noteworthy that Carol is neither Jewish, nor does she have a history of involvement in activist or leftist politics. On many occasions I have heard Carol talk about how activist politics have been something that she has been adverse to throughout her life. “Activists always seemed so angry,” she says. She sees that anger, along with other unacknowledged psychological conditions that fuel conflict, as contributing to the

conflicts and wars of this world, rather than offering solutions. While not politically active in the conventional sense, Carol has long been concerned about the destruction of conflict and war. She traces this interest back to 1954, to the summer after she had graduated from college. On a bicycle trip across Germany she describes being “stunned into awareness” when she entered towns that were still ravaged by the Second World War. Twenty years later as a therapist with a practice in the San Francisco Bay Area, Carol got together with a small group of like-minded therapists and they began practicing conflict resolution skills together. She eventually began offering the skills she developed through teaching and facilitating. Adding to these skills and how she thinks about them, was her fascination with Quantum physics. In the introduction to “Listening with the Heart” Carol reveals how new physics has shaped her thinking about social change:

The whole idea of field theory and how the build-up of critical mass can tip the scales, led me to this realization: when each of us takes responsibility to live our lives with integrity, aligning with and supporting others who are doing the same, ultimately, if enough people join in, the whole picture will shift. I continue to believe this is a basic principle of life (Hwochinsky 2001, xiv).

For Carol, our ability to interrupt the instinctual response of a fight or flight—an important aspect of Compassionate Listening—is linked to evolutionary developments in the human brain and nervous system. In this way, her focus is on the link between the interior, psychological world and how that manifests in the exterior worlds that surround us.

Carol defines Compassionate Listening as a quality of listening empathetically, with care for those to whom we listen. It means listening for the needs and suffering of others, which are often buried under positions and postures. She thus

describes Compassionate Listening as a practice that requires intention and discipline. In this way, she sees it akin to many spiritual practices that aim to develop our ability to be fully present to what is happening in any given moment.

Individual preparation [for Compassionate Listening] involves primarily learning to come to presence—to bring attention to the “now”—not pulled away by internal judgements and conflicts, nor distracted by ideas and events in the environment. Being quiet internally and attentive leads us to being fully present to another person. (17)

Carol likes quoting Einstein who cautioned that a problem cannot be solved at the level it was created. In this sense, Compassionate Listening allows us to respond to a conflict in new ways. It does so by cultivating the intention and capacity to expand our partial view of reality by taking in, considering and including information that comes from listening to the “Other.” In this way, she sees Compassionate Listening as a process that supports us to respond to conflict with something other than fear or confrontation, and in so doing, it makes way for a new realm of possibilities.

What is interesting to note here is that, while Green has embraced the philosophy and methodology of Compassionate Listening, incorporating it as a defining feature of the project, she does so as someone deeply engaged in the political realities of the conflict. Importantly for Green, the emphasis on listening, becomes a way through the polarizing narratives of identity and activist politics that Green found so unhelpful. In this regard, it is precisely the third key feature of the project—the third side element—that allows the project to serve as a kind of nexus for several different networks and approaches to peace, reconciliation, justice and coexistence. As such, the project remains wedded to concerns about the structural roots of the conflict, at the same time that it remains open and inclusive.

The Third Side

Any effort to define the hybrid nature of the Compassionate Listening Project, must contend with this third party, or *third side* element of the project's delegations. Upon adopting the methodology of Compassionate Listening, a key goal of the project became reconciliation, the resumption of the relationship between conflicting parties. In the case of this project, however, between whom and about what is the resumption, the reconciliation? What gets rejoined or re-membered when a group of North Americans (many of whom are Jewish) travels to Israel with the intention to listen to various parties in the protracted Israeli-Palestinian conflict? Given that the Compassionate Listening delegates meet and listen with each side of the conflict separately, how (if at all) are the effects of these encounters transferred to the wider conflict? In other words, given that the primary adversaries of the conflict are not meeting in face-to-face encounters, how can the project be doing what it claims to be doing?

On the surface at least, a contradiction exists between how the method of Compassionate Listening is described in the project literature, and the actual design of the project. The web site offers this about Compassionate Listening as a conflict resolution technology or tool: "[It] is based on a simple yet profound formula for the resolution of conflict: adversaries giving the gift of listening." Yet, the project itself is not based on bringing the primary adversaries in the conflict together, but instead it functions in this third side role, shuttling back and forth between multiple parties. This contradiction seems to be at the base of the divergent perspectives I encountered

during interviews about the nature, function and purpose of the project. Some delegates would emphasize what the listening does for those that they come to listen to. As an example, one delegate claimed: "...I know that it works. Listening heals. It makes you feel like you are not alone any more." Among those I interviewed who meet with the delegations, a few would confirm the importance of being listened to, while most would instead emphasize the importance of what they had to say and how it might impact the listeners. In line with this, most of the delegates that I spoke with, also talked most about the effect that these encounters had on them, rather than on those they came to listen to. In the following chapter I describe the multiple perspectives of these various constituencies in their full complexity, fleshing out the intersections and divergences and weaving them into a detailed mosaic with social, political and historical dimensions. The point here is to illuminate the complexity of how the project combines Compassionate Listening with the third party feature of the citizen diplomacy delegations.

The third key feature of the project therefore involves considering the complex nature of these North American delegates a third side to the conflict. According to William Ury (2000), it may take two sides to fight, but a third side is generally needed to resolve that fight. For Ury, this third side extends beyond the traditional role of a neutral mediator or conflict resolution facilitator to the entire community acting as third parties to facilitate the prevention, resolution or containment of a conflict (8). In line with Ury's perspective on the variety of constructive roles that the third side can assume in a conflict, project delegates claim to act as witness, bridge-builder, healer, and activist as they move between and within

a complex field of diverse perspectives on the conflict. Also in line with Ury's perspective is the insider/outsider nature of the North American delegates acting as third sides to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. From a third side perspective, delegates have location as outsiders to the conflict (as neutral bystanders, concerned world citizens, concerned U.S. citizens, or students of the conflict), and as insiders (Jewish Americans, Palestinian Americans, friends or activists aiming, for instance, to affect U.S. foreign policy). It is this third side nature of the project that works to link the diplomacy and interventionist features of the project.

Among the factors that have gone into shaping the third side nature of the project, is the organic way in which the project has developed. The project has grown largely by word of mouth. The resources have never been available to aggressively follow-up on any decision to do outreach in one direction or another. Green expressed it to me like this: "We've never done marketing. Not for Jews, not for Palestinians. We kind of take whoever comes." However, along with this take-whomever-comes policy are choices that steer the project in directions she sees fit for it to go.

Throughout the history of the project, Green has been actively making decisions that would shape the third-side nature of the project. An example of this is offered in the decision to switch plans for the fourth-Compassionate Listening delegation from a designated all-Jewish trip to a trip that would be open to delegates with mixed backgrounds. The decision was born out of the experience of a mixed Compassionate Listening delegation (November 1998) and how valuable she saw this to be. Among the mix of Jews and Christians that traveled on the November 1998 delegation, were two Arab American women. Soon after arriving home from this trip,

Green shared her enthusiasm about the experience in an open letter to friends of the project:

[When] I reflect on what made this group so special, it was having so many voices of the conflict right there in our group. Each experience we had, we had to see it through each others' eyes. It was rich. And sometimes very awkward, and sometimes painful, but very inspiring.

Given what she describes as the large and insular nature of the Jewish narrative, Green continues to find it helpful to expose it to other narratives. Throughout its evolution and growth the Compassionate Listening Project has continued to attract a large percentage of Jewish Americans. This remains therefore, a dominant, but not exclusive feature of the project.

Building on the Jewish nature of the Compassionate Listening Project, the project's small staff of facilitators and coordinators would come to include a fourth team member. This decision provides another example of how Green has been actively shaping the third-side nature of the project. Fulfilling her wish to recruit individuals who were deeply connected to their Jewish identities, the first Compassionate Listening delegation was all Jewish. This trip included a number of religious Jews, among them a reform Rabbi, a Jewish renewal Rabbi and a conservative Cantor. Also travelling with this delegation was Andrea Cohen-Kiener, a woman with deep roots into the liberal Jewish communities of both North America and Israel. Studying to become a Jewish Renewal Rabbi at the time, and fresh from a recent six-month stint in Israel, she was, from Green's perspective, an immediate asset to the project. Cohen-Kiener spoke to me about her experience during that first delegation and what she thought led up to Green's invitation to join the team:

I read maps and I speak Hebrew. So, like, right away I was able to start talking to the driver and trying to kind of negotiate with this one and that one. I'd been in Israel before and so I was helpful to her right away. She empowered us all to just rise to the level of our competence. But, I think she just needed some of the skills that I had. They weren't really optional. If she's going to continue to bring Jewish groups in, she needs to be able to deepen her sensitivity to Jewish Israel.

In this light, the decision to bring Cohen-Kiener on board the project team can be seen as a decision that serves to both augment and tune the Jewish tone of the project.

Cohen-Kiener is unambiguous about the insider nature of third side role. She identifies as a religious Jew, with deep commitments to her Judaism and to Jewish community. Cohen-Kiener has no hesitancy about claiming her place within the Jewish community. In this regard, she spoke to me about how she sees her Jewish identity as central to her relationship to this project.

I have not talked about the Compassionate Listening Project yet to non-Jewish groups and I probably won't for a long time. Because, I don't need to add to Israel bashing and to anti-Semitism. On the other hand, in the Jewish community, we have a lot of work to do. And I do *urgently* want to talk to my people about what we need to see. What we need to become cognizant of. But that's dirty laundry and I'm not going to do that with just anyone. I'm going to do that with my people. I will have my kids do laundry with me, and you don't need to help with my laundry cause that's my job. You see?

In a similar respect, Cohen-Kiener sees her Jewish presence in the project as contributing a certain amount of legitimacy to the project as it tries to create further inroads into Israeli communities that are not staunch supporters of the peace process.

On this subject she has this to say:

Anyone can come in and say we have to respect the Arabs. We have to see them as human beings. You know, but to come in and say, "This is Ishmael. These are our cousins." You know, and I'm an observant Jewish woman, you know, it lends some credence and some depth. It's not like I'm

some big betrayer. I'm not a traitor to my people. I'm functioning within the categories of the tribe. So that's why I'm able to give credibility.

Cohen Kiener would take her first trip with the project team in November of 1999. Her official role was co-delegation leader, however, she would also have an integral role assisting Hwochinshy with the training and as a group facilitator. In December of 2000—with the second Intifada raging—Cohen-Kiener led her first solo mission to the region. Since that time, Cohen-Kiener has traveled with several delegations.

The choices that Leah has made about who she incorporates into the framework and structure of the project serves to expand and define the character of the project in significant ways. As an observant Jewish woman, Andrea's networks and sensibilities extend the reach of the project into sectors of the religious Jewish community. Namely, as a Jewish Renewal Rabbi, Cohen-Kiener is located on the progressive margins of the religious Jewish community. She often gives workshops, for instances, at a Jewish retreat center called Elat Chayyim, located in the Catskill mountains in upstate New York. According to their web site, a typical day at Elat Chayyim might include yoga, meditation, and experimental prayer services. Importantly, the individuals drawn from these communities are likely to resonate with the language of Compassionate Listening and with Carol's interpretation and development of Compassionate Listening as practice and discipline. Arguably, the project's three defining features—citizen diplomacy, Compassionate Listening and its *third side* element—emerges out of the synergistic combination of these three individuals—Leah, Carol, and Andrea—and what they each bring.

Conclusion

There is an interesting irony in the observation that while the Compassionate Listening Project has adopted a methodology founded on a rejection of adversarial politics, many of the project's activities—such as demonstrating against the demolition of Palestinian homes—are directly political in that they challenge contested Israeli policies. The Compassionate Listening Project does not espouse or pursue an articulated political or social justice agenda. In fact, Green's success in attracting a wide range of diversity in its constituency, representing a range of political perspectives and positions, suggests that it could not do so without alienating many and thus altering the nature of the project. The project has come to be designed around the core belief that everyone—in the words of one participant, “left/right, secular/religious, political/spiritual”—has a piece of the answer. In line with this, the project has been notably successful in developing and maintaining relationships with some of the most dissenting, marginalized voices in Israel and the Palestinian territories, such as right-wing settlers and Hamas leaders, at the same time that it continues to attract an increasing diversity among its North American participants.

In the same article in the “Yes” magazine where Green reflects about the early success of the project, she further expresses her satisfaction with what the project seems to be accomplishing and what she sees as the power and potential of listening:

Although we are not always ‘successful’ in our own eyes, Israelis and Palestinians on all sides feel and appreciate our intention, which seems to be the most important factor. When we listen with the intention of building empathy and understanding, we also quickly build trust, and possibilities emerge. We have been able to bring opposing sides together in one room to listen to each other because our intentions are trusted. Our experience has demonstrated that people want to take risks for peace, and will take risks, if given an opportunity to really be heard (Yes, Winter 2001/2002).

Green claims that in the past decade, no one has declined a listening session with the project. Against the backdrop of a crumbled peace process, and an ongoing new cycle of violence in the region, Green's vision—emphasizing listening as one of the keys to breaking the cycles of violence—is supported by the many who resonate with the project's intentions and as such it continues to expand and grow.

Further, this careful look at the evolving nature of the project and its three defining, interrelated features—citizen diplomacy, compassionate listening, and the third-side nature of the delegations—reveals an ongoing tension between revolutionary and resolutionary approaches to peacebuilding. More specifically, Leah Green has struggled with how to expose North Americans (in particular, Jewish Americans) to what many perceive as the structural roots of the conflict while not acting to further aggravate polarizing tensions. This close-up look at the project's history and ongoing evolution reveals some of the ways that citizen peacemakers are aiming to pursue social justice agendas (which often aggravate social tensions) and agendas of reconciliation (which seek to heal those same tensions) at the same time. This tension at the heart of the project, therefore, is arguably an important one because of how it highlights some of the core complexities involved while actively holding the concerns and perspectives of both sides of a conflict simultaneous.

CHAPTER FIVE

STORIES FROM THE THIRD SIDE

In the previous chapters I describe how the Compassionate Listening project has evolved through grappling with a tension that is core to contemporary peacemaking today. Differences at the heart of this tension address whether personal vs. structural transformations—resolution vs. revolution—should be the first priority among peacemakers. In this chapter I turn to the North American constituents. With an eye to the ways this tension may exist among the various strands of this constituency, I explore some of the core themes of their experience. Examined in context—where the perspectives of multiple constituents, operating from multiple locations are taken into consideration—various themes around the meanings ascribed to concepts such as peace, reconciliation, justice and co-existence come into view.

As emphasized in the preceding chapter, Leah Green's role as founding director of the Compassionate Listening project has been one of negotiating a paradoxical balance. On the one hand is her ongoing commitment to exposing North Americans to human rights abuses and issues of injustice as mainly experienced by Palestinians. On the other hand, is her commitment to accomplishing this first goal while not further adding to the polarization of the conflict. Many would agree that exposing North Americans to the lived realities of the conflict as experienced by Palestinians means exposing them to the structural basis of the conflict, the core asymmetries of dominance and control. The crowded, central section of the West Bank city of Hebron is surrounded by barbed wire, check points and armed soldiers with rifles pointed from roof tops at the civilian life below. The palpable tension of

this situation provides a stark contrast to the quiet, tree-line streets of the Jewish neighborhood of French Hill, which is on the outskirts of East Jerusalem. Most delegations visit both places and along the way *listen* as informed human rights advocates and activists tell them about the policies and politics that have shaped these parallel realities. This line-up of experiences becomes a crash course in the link between Israel's policies surrounding the occupation of Palestinian territories and the anger and frustration on the Palestinian street. Israel's role and responsibility in the perpetuation of the conflict is a key theme of the delegations. Green has made it her challenge to expose these North American delegates to this underbelly of the conflict while at the same time working hard to avoid fostering a demonized portrait of Israel as the oppressive occupier. Compassionate Listening has become the tool that she uses for navigating this complex agenda.

While a dominant theme of the delegations involves exposing delegates to the structural basis for the conflict, when examined up close, the methodology of Compassionate Listening emphasizes *personal* awakenings that are ambiguously linked to social transformations. Carol Hwochinsky (2001) has written a self-published guidebook for Compassionate Listening that is used by the project to train delegates. In her guidebook, Carol claims that Compassionate Listening "...is essential to any dialogue which hopes to lead to peace and possible reconciliation" (3). Further, attesting to the benefits of Compassionate Listening, she reveals her vision for how it changes the world:

When asked about Compassionate Listening and what good it can possibly do when the problems in the world are so pervasive, I return in my mind to the many people whose stories I have heard. I am certain, though we may not be able to visibly change the events of the world, that changing one life makes

the effort worthwhile. I know lives are altered by these experiences. I am confident compassion and understanding ultimately change the lives of all who participate (xvii).

Hwochinsky's description of Compassionate Listening and its benefits places an emphasis on what can happen internally to listeners and speakers alike. She is working to change the world one person at a time. There is a declared simplicity in the methodology: Compassionate Listening heals and supports reconciliation as individual hearts are opened. In the following sections I examine the delegates' experiences in light of this claim. The stories that many of them tell about their experiences do indicate that the trips serve to foster expanded, more inclusive perspectives about the conflict. Yet, when the identities of the delegates of these Compassionate Listening encounters, along with how they make sense of these experiences, are examined up close, the claim of simplicity breaks down.

For all parties, Compassionate Listening appears to set up a field where competing perspectives and agendas can meet and reside. Those that have allied themselves with a human rights agenda have generally taken a hard and critical stance against Israel and its policies, which in the case of Global Exchange, for instance, serves to shape their itineraries in ways that support this perspective. Given the inclusive intention of the Compassionate Listening philosophy, the itineraries of these trips however, extend beyond a social justice agenda to include, for instance, advocates of settlement expansion, victims of terrorist attacks and right-wing government officials. The perspectives of these voices often function to disrupt the continuity of the social justice narrative that seems to privilege the experiences of Palestinians at the same time that the methodology of Compassionate Listening

invites delegates to open themselves—with empathy, curiosity and care—to the cognitively dissonant messages presented by those with competing standpoints and perspectives. One delegate described the structure of the trips like this:

The way they put it together, and who we've seen at each step of the way, has allowed for a building. It's like the trip to Gaza added a whole new layer of bricks to the wall, to the understanding. You start to see one set of realities, a perspective on a problem, and then all of a sudden you see another perspective and another. It all starts to come together like a hologram, this thing that now you can start to turn and see different things as you turn it. From this you get a more holistic understanding.

Another delegate expressed how this trip has added to his many years of reading, studying and trying to understand both sides of the conflict: "I've discovered that it's not just both sides but many sides." In addition to a more holistic understanding of the conflict, are the internal *awakenings*, the emotional and psychological shifts and openings that are commonly reported by delegates about their experiences. A careful look at these experiences further exposes the complexities of the project, its methodology and more generally, the complexities of peacebuilding in divided societies.

In the following sections, I turn to the delegates themselves, examining who they are and how it is that they are making meaning of the experiences related to these delegations. As I consider who these individuals are, I am aware that their locations are informed by the intersections of class, gender, Jewish and other ethnic, religious and cultural identities. Each delegate comes with their own level of knowledge, understanding and relationship to Israel and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. While analyzing my data I have paid attention to how these multiple perspectives and locations constellate in my data. What follows is an examination of

who these delegates are and the ways that they are making meaning—the stories they are telling—about their experiences.

Since human beings have had language, stories have been an important means through which we create and recreate shared meanings and shared understanding. For that reason, social scientists have long been interested in the stories that human beings tell and the relationship these stories have to collective experience. More recently, narrative and story telling has become an increasingly looked at feature of conflict theory. Sara Cobb, for instance, speaks about the role of mediation in a conflict setting as “a struggle to destabilize conflict narratives, a struggle to open up stories to alternative meanings and interpretations (Cobb 1993, 251). In other words, conflict resolution practices often can serve to facilitate the generation of expanded, more inclusive stories through exposure to new and different information. As this occurs, new possibilities for resolution and reconciliation are also created. An examination of the meaning making that happens through storytelling offers important clues as to the ways that the project may be serving to expand conflict narratives in constructive ways. Because of this, woven throughout the pages that follow are some of the stories that are being told and retold about what happens during these trips. This closer look at the project delegates and their multiple perspectives and stories is meant to offer a fuller picture of the complex, problematic and compelling social world of these peacemakers.

THE JEWISH DELEGATES

The all-Jewish nature of that first Compassionate Listening delegation has remained a dominant feature of the project. Throughout its evolution and growth the Compassionate Listening Project has continued to attract a large percentage of Jewish Americans. While these delegates embody a range in their relationship to Judaism and Israel, all of those attracted to the project share a curiosity and openness about different perspectives on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and care about its constructive resolution. This implies a willingness to be open to viewpoints with which they may disagree. For many this further implies viewpoints that challenge the mainstream Jewish perspective on the conflict, which has consistently been in support of Israel's official policies and positions on the conflict. While many of the delegates describe feeling disconnected to their Jewish roots, more often there is a strong investment in their Jewish identities and with that a strong connection to Israel. In the preceding chapter I describe how the Compassionate Listening Project is difficult to define because, while it is promoted as an intervention to the conflict, it does not bring the two primary sides of the conflict—Israelis and Palestinians—together. Importantly, what the project does do is bring American Jews, many of whom have been raised to see Palestinians as enemies of the Jewish people, in direct contact with that enemy.

The themes that emerge from the stories these delegates tell about their experiences offer valuable insights about how concepts of peace, justice and coexistence are linked to issues of identity. As has been stated, the Compassionate Listening Project evolved into being as Leah Green juggled the complex agenda of raising consciousness about the realities of injustice that are at the base of the Israeli-

Palestinian conflict without serving to further polarize the conflict through the demonizing of Israel and Jewish Israelis. This agenda arose from grappling with issues related to her own Jewish identity and to the issues with which she witnessed others grappling. This section is about the issues with which other Jewish delegates grapple. How do these Jewish delegates engage and respond to the tension between revolution and resolution, between justice and mercy? How, for instance, is their curiosity and openness at odds with aspects of their Jewish identities, and how are they making sense of this tension? Through exploring this question, what emerges are themes of moral responsibility, expanded consciousness, as well as personal growth, development and healing.

Building Bridges and Amending Injustices

The complex relationship that Jewish delegates have to Israel and to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict takes a variety of forms. Generalizing about the Jewish delegates, Leah expressed to me that there are those, on the one hand, “who love Israel and want the country to survive” and, then, on the other hand, “there are those that look at the situation and are horrified with the morality of what is happening.” I discovered that for many of these Jewish delegates, both of these statements come to describe how they give meaning to their experiences. Many I spoke with would express a sense of solidarity with Israelis *and* a sense of outrage about the plight of the Palestinians at the same time. Making sense of this dissonant experience of empathy with both peoples, former delegate Susan Heckler expressed in a published interview: “Israel is the most morally complex place that I have ever been to.” Seeing

the trips as a *responsible* way to come to Israel, as many delegates do, appears to be related to this sense of moral complexity.

Rabbi David Zaslow was a participant during the first all-Jewish Compassionate Listening delegation. Describing his politics vis a vis Israel as right-of-center, his attraction to the Compassionate Listening Project was based in wanting to see what would happen when he exposed his views to more liberal view-points.

I thought it would be an important educational opportunity for me to take to go with a more left of center peace group. [I wanted] to see how my own positions would be impacted. Whether they'd be strengthened, would they be shaken, would they be changed, to see what would happen....I wanted to go not really so much to change Israelis or Palestinians, but to change me.

When asked about how he was transformed as a listener, rather than speak about how his own views have changed, he emphasized how, through his experience as a Compassionate Listening delegate, his views have been *expanded* to now include Palestinians and their experience.

If my belief that the security of Israel is paramount, in my paradigm, of the way I am a Zionist, and the way I see Israel's threatened existence, that, for sure, that belief system clouded my ability to ever really try to delve into the pain and the hardships and the struggles of individual Palestinians, Palestinian groups, family groups, neighborhoods, let alone the Palestinians as a people. So for me, the transformative part of the journey was certainly a sense of empathy and understanding for the Palestinians that I had never imagined was possible in my heart. I didn't think I could open a space in my heart because I had definitely seen the Palestinian movement as an enemy movement of my own beliefs and an enemy of my own people. And for sure my heart really opened up to their pain and their suffering.

He spoke, for instance, about the difficulty that Palestinians have in obtaining building permits and the inhumanity and injustice he viewed in Israel's home demolition policy. The prejudice he saw in these policies was unacceptable from his standpoint as a religious Jew, based on his understanding of the Torah. This critical

view of Israeli policies, arguably, does not abandon Israel's security needs, nor do they abandon or betray his love and concern for Israel. This expanded narrative has important implications for the peacebuilding process. It suggests how the project is seeding the ground of North American Jewish communities with narratives that are more open and inclusive. The qualities of such narratives are arguably the fertile soil from which a sustainable peace can grow.

Among the many Jewish delegates that define this trip as an opportunity for personal transformation, growth and development, are those that see Compassionate Listening and the experiences of these delegations as a way to expand their capacities as peacebuilders. In resonance with Leah's intention to challenge injustices and heal relationships at the same time, these delegates are attracted to the project because of how it supports learning a new way of relating to the conflict.

Common among those that welcome this challenge is a perspective on how peacemaking requires that we learn to pursue issues of injustice *and* mend relationships. Rabbi Bentley is Honorary President of the Jewish Peace Fellowship. Amending social injustices and resolving conflicts non-violently are life-long commitments for him. As such, he has been a critic of the peace movement because of how it is often dualistic and righteous in pursuing its goals. He concludes that because of his values—his love of Israel combined with his social justice perspectives—he is compelled towards Compassionate Listening. “I have to learn this,” he says. This is what attracted him to the trip.

One of the things that has always bothered me about the peace movement, as such, is that many people in the peace movement tend to enter conflict situations with the idea that one side is right and one side is wrong. One side is the oppressor and the other side, the oppressed. And, I have come around to

understanding that that is not a way to solve a conflict. You can either—and I find myself writing and saying this again and again to people who are peace activists—that you can either be an advocate for justice or you can be a peacemaker, but it is very hard to do absolutely both at the same time. And a prime example is Israel. And maybe it is because of my love of Israel and being a pacifist at the same time that I have to learn this method or else abandon one or the other. Because Israel, I believe, has behaved very badly. But, I sympathize with Israel and, I understand.

Judith Kolokof was drawn to the project for very similar reasons.

In working for peace and justice I understood when I came to do the job of [Regional Director of the Pacific Northwest Region of the American Friends Service Committee], I realized that when I went to a meeting with the women for the peace movement or the peace coalition around the test ban treaty, that nothing had changed in the 35 years since I had been in the peace movement in Chicago and that the same old people were there. There were no young people, there were no people of color. There was none of that. And I understood that something had to change in the way we talked about and listened to things if we were going to build movements for our positions. So that was a piece of what Compassionate Listening brought into my life as a possible way of dealing.

Offering another example, Ann Flatte majored in Middle Eastern studies in college because she wanted to know “the facts” surrounding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Shortly after arriving and settling into the hotel, the delegations get together for a go-around of introductions, sharing with one another why it is they came. On this opening occasion, Ann explains how she came to realize that knowing the facts isn’t enough. She realized that winning the argument does not mean winning the peace. Now a filmmaker, Anne became drawn to the project because of her interest in how, through listening, people’s perspectives transform to become more open, empathetic, and inclusive. Anne traveled as a delegate with the project in January and May of 2000. During her second delegation, she brought a camera along and collected footage for a documentary on the theme of personal transformations.

For the many Jewish delegates who define this project as an opportunity for personal transformation, growth, and development, the meaning they ascribe to these trips is embedded in personal life histories, values and experiences. Heena Reiter traveled in May 2000 with the Compassionate Listening delegation for a second time. Describing herself as a “committed Jew who loves Israel” Heena founded a Jewish-Palestinian dialogue group in her home community following the return from her first delegation in 1998 and has since gone on to establish a center for Jewish healing. The Geshher Center that Heena founded in August of 2000, is a contemplative learning center with a particular focus on supporting Jewish/Israeli-Palestinian peace efforts through education about the conflict from diverse and multiple sources^{*}. During the opening round of introductions she talked about how, since that first delegation, she has noticed that she finds herself much more curious and interested in those who are different from her, whereas before she avoided difference out of fear. For Heena, encountering her fears is a process of healing the historically distressed Jewish spirit that is plagued with feelings of insecurity. She explains: “I’m healing those barriers between me and other people...I think the more boundaries I cross within myself, as a Jew, to being at peace in the world, feeling safe in the world, that the more I’ll be able to help other Jews feel safe.”

Offering a different example, Judith Kolokoff also describes how this project offers to her a valued opportunity to grow. As a radical secular Jewish woman with 35 years of experience as an activist for social justice, however, Judith’s internal

^{*} Geshher Center for Jewish Spirituality, Meditation & Healing. <http://www.geshercenter.org>. (accessed: January 20, 2005).

challenge and opportunity for growth takes on a different focus. During the opening go-around of introductions, here is some of what Judith had to say.

I am deeply passionate about how I think about things that occur here and I am deeply passionate and angry about the oppression that I see and I don't understand how my people, who have suffered oppression can turn around and be the oppressors they are...It's very painful and I'm angry because I feel as if I've been betrayed and so its going to be a real important piece of my growth to know that I can learn to listen to people with whom I am in such violent disagreement with. Because I do know there is humanity there. They have a touch of their own truth that needs to be honored. Whether or not I can do that is really something I hope you will all help me with.

For both of these delegates the Compassionate Listening trip represents an intensely personal journey that offers the chance for growth and the opportunity to question and expand on how, as Jewish identified people, they construct their relationship to the Israeli-Palestinians conflict. As such, these experiences represent how these Jewish Americans are proactively working to transform certain characteristics that they associate with their Jewish identity.

Finally, the following story provides the most poignant demonstration of how this trip is seen and experienced as an opportunity for healing that in turn becomes a foundation, a platform for peacemaking. In the summer of 1990, on a beach in Tel Aviv, Nikki Landau lost her best friend, Manie Kimelman, in a terrorist attack. They had gone to Israel as part of an organized youth trip. Both were high school students who had grown up on the same street in Toronto. Nine years later Nikki would return to Israel, along with her parents, as delegates with the April 1999 Compassionate Listening trip. Several months after she returned from the delegation, Nikki's Rabbi would ask her to deliver the sermon at her temple, Temple Emanuel. On September 12th, the second day of Rosh Hashanah, Nikki Landau stood before her congregation

and told about these two trips to Israel. She first tells about the tragic event that occurred in 1990, and how it exploded her world and left her with a profound emptiness and darkness. Then she tells about going back:

Someone said to me once that ‘you can’t change what other people do but you can change your response to it’. It took me nine years to change my response of grief and anger and emptiness. But this year I decided that I was ready, and not only ready but responsible for the re-creation of my world.... This year I returned to Israel to help make peace (Landau 1999).

She described moments during the Compassionate Listening trip and ultimately how those moments transformed her response to her earlier experience. She reflected and observed: “It seems to me that compassion is the only human response to a world that is more and more dehumanizing. And in being compassionate, I was greeted with compassion. And that changed the way I saw the world.” She said that she now uses compassion to fill that void of emptiness and darkness that was with her for all those years.

Enemy Encounters

Jewish delegates generally welcome opportunities to meet with Palestinians. The experience is one that is commonly described as educational and transformative. The daily check-ins frequently include accounts about how the trip’s experiences are at odds with what they learned growing up about Palestinians and about the conflict. Visits to Palestinian refugee camps, for instance, and stories that describe the origins of the Palestinian refugee problem are directly at odds with narratives that claim that Palestinians left their homes voluntarily in 1948. Similarly, when a former Jerusalem city planner, and a prominent Israeli human rights lawyer detail the history, current

reality, impact and extent of home demolition policies, stories about how these are isolated cases based on straightforward violations of the law shatter. “I had no idea it was this bad” was heard over and over again throughout the trip in response to witnessing and hearing about the lived realities of the occupation. In contrast to the usual chatter, a notable silence took over the bus as the Compassionate Listening delegation entered Gaza City in March of 2000. The crumbling cinderblock buildings that line rubble-strewn streets, along with the notable absence of sidewalks, greenery, or parks can make a shocking impression. “No wonder they hate us” was one comment I caught muttered under the breath of a delegate. Experiences similar to this one throughout the trip serve to provide context to the hostility and anger of the Palestinians. In spite of this, when making sense of their experiences, a core theme among Jewish delegates is a shift in their perspectives around Palestinian desire and will for peace.

A core feature of the delegations is the Palestinian home stays. Delegates are paired off, or placed into a group of three, sometimes four, and sent off with a Palestinian family for one or two nights. While each family visit is a unique experience, for many, this was the highlight of the trip. The intimacy of being welcomed and served a meal in the home of Palestinians had powerful significance for the Jewish delegates. Perhaps more than any other encounter, this one offered a direct experience that challenged and often transformed the widely held stereotype that ordinary Palestinians do not want peace. Susan Heckler expressed this while telling about the moment of saying farewell to her family:

When I left that family, one of them took a ring that said “Peace” off his hand as a gift. I said, “If someone asks me if the Palestinians want peace, I’ll show

them this ring and I'll say that this was given to me by a Palestinian (Heckler 1998, 7).

Again and again, I listened as the enthusiasm over Palestinian hospitality was directly linked to the shattering of stereotypes. One story stands out in particular.

A conservative religious Jewish delegate, Cantor Bob Scheer, had previously visited the West Bank and shared with me how this trip was different than the others: "I'd been to Hebron before, but I had never been there without being scared." In an article he wrote about his home-stay, the retelling of his experience evokes a mythic, ancient quality of two peoples, two historic enemies peacefully sharing themselves as they partook in a meal together.

What a remarkable Shabbat that was: in the shadow of the place where Abraham was buried by his two sons, Ishmael and Issac, we recited Kiddish to bring in the Shabbat as our hosts were ending their day of Ramadan fasting. In that moment, when our respective religious traditions intersected in celebration, we could feel the joining of our souls in friendship.

Given the Sabbath, Cantor Bob and his group chose to return by foot the following morning to the center of Hebron where the delegation would reassemble. Their Palestinian family is located at the foot of the dirt road leading to the gates of the settlement of Kiryat Arba. Having suffered two home demolitions and slated for a third, relations between the Jabber family and their Jewish neighbors were not good. The most direct route to the center of Hebron was up the dirt road and through the guarded gate of this Jewish community. Entering this gate and walking through its suburban streets would lead them directly to the plaza steps outside of Abraham's Tomb. When he spoke to me, describing the encounter with the guards at the gate,

there is an evident pride in being able to surprise them and their perceptions of Palestinians.

The people that we stayed with were gracious hosts and the next morning we were walking to the town and when we got to the gates of the city a guard came out and said, “What are you doing here?” “Do you have papers?” “No, we don’t have papers. It’s Shabbot, we are not carrying that sort of thing with us.” And he said, “How did you get here? Where are you coming from?” And we said that we all spent the night just down the street there.” “Where?” We pointed to the houses and his eyes got about that big and he said, “What Courage you have to have stayed there.” And that didn’t mean anything to us. You know, we stayed with grandma and grandpa and the aunts and their four children. My most significant memory was in the first night of waking in the middle of the night and grandpa putting another blanket over me.

The delegates commonly express a similar sense of intimacy and kinship with the families that they visit. I learned from the Palestinians they stay with that some delegates keep in touch long after the trip. From the first moments that she arrived in country for a second time with the project, Heena Reiter, for example, starting sharing with us how much it meant to her that once again she would see her host family.

For many, the challenging aspect of the Compassionate Listening delegation was not so much meeting the Palestinian *enemy* but rather meeting Israelis that hold views very different from their own. These Jewish delegates commit to being open to Israeli perspectives on the conflict that may challenge their liberal social justice perspectives. I listened while many expressed anxiety and uneasiness before, during and after meetings with Israelis that hold strong right-wing views. Some of this would have to do with encountering fundamental thinking, as one delegate shared with me:

That was a fear that I had before I came here. That I would find [the settlers] the hardest to listen to. That turned out to be true that it was very difficult. I think it is like trying to listen compassionately to any kind of fanaticism. It is just hard for me. You know they are so rigid. Their view of the world, there doesn’t seem to be an opening for any other kind of understanding.

This view was commonly expressed among those within the group that followed the conflict from a human rights and/or peace movement perspective. Encounters with right-wing Israelis proved to be most troubling for these individuals. In a sense, they were being asked to face a different *enemy*.

After encounters with outspoken right-wing Israelis, the group would commonly reference these experiences. During one unique evening the November 1999 delegation found themselves faced with a room full of vocal Israelis challenging the intentions and the motives of the Compassionate Listening project. This one-time event was a screening of the documentary “Children of Abraham,” produced by Leah Green about the project. The film has been shown throughout North America countless times, and is the most frequently cited reason delegates give for how they learned about the project and what inspired them to join. Hosting this screening was the Van Leer Institute, a prominent cultural and educational center in Jerusalem. In the audience this evening were about a hundred Jerusalem residents. Sprinkled among them were around a dozen outspoken right-wing Zionists. In particular one woman in the audience, who was wearing blue, expressed her views in a manner that was aggressively hostile and unrelenting during the question and answer period. After this evening, references to *the lady in blue* became commonplace among the group. The term became a metaphor for some of the worst fears among the delegates. Namely the fear was that hostile, vocal Jewish opposition is what awaited them once they began to speak out—expressing that freshly informed counter narrative—back home.

In contrast with the Palestinian home stays, notable differences characterized the meetings with right-wing Israelis. In the following chapter I will explore the

content of these meetings. Here I am interested in how delegates, and in particular, Jewish delegates, responded to these encounters. One noteworthy difference is the interest in the effects that the Compassionate Listening encounters might have had on the individuals that met and spoke with the delegations. In reference to these encounters, delegates frequently questioned whether or not they were able to “get through to them” or whether or not the listening was “having an effect” on them. It was during these sessions that the delegates would most often pose questions that served to provoke or challenge the speakers. In several instances this was referred to as “falling out of Compassionate Listening.” The following story provides a notable example of this.

It is another common feature of the delegations to have dinner with the Israeli families living in a West Bank settlement. Some groups have even had overnight stays with these families. During the November 1999 delegation, we visited the settlement of Beit Ayn nestled in the barren West Bank hills surrounding Jerusalem. Upon arrival we all gathered in the home of MaryAnn. Present also was her mother, Rachel who had come to Israel in 1949 with \$10 in her pocket after being released from Auschwitz. She has considered Israel to be her home ever since, even during a several year stint in South Africa. We listened as they spoke about their life experiences and what Israel means to them. Following this portion of the evening, we were then parceled off to the caravan-homes for dinner with different families. The Green family, Leah, her father, her stepmother and her thirteen-year-old half-sister, had dinner with Rachel and MaryAnn, while the rest of us went off with other families. What started out as a pleasant conversation disintegrated very quickly as the

Greens “fell out of Compassionate Listening.” The conversation, as reported by the Greens, quickly became one of each side trying to get the other to see their point of view. The entire Green family came away from the dinner expressing regrets about having been swept away during the encounter. Afterwards, Leah wrote a letter to Rachel’s family apologizing. Interestingly, when trying to make sense of the evening, each family member talked about how the fact that they were all Jewish made it easier to forget the intention of Compassionate Listening. It was the youngest family member, Natanya, who expressed this most directly to me.

I was talking to Leah about it and I think we agreed that we kind of felt it was okay that we could drop the whole listening thing and just talk to them. That was because we felt like they were *us* and it was like you could just have an argument with your family. You can have the whole argument because you feel it’s alright, because you are both Jews and you are trying to come from the same place.

It was not the difference in this case but the assumption of sameness that posed the biggest challenge to these Compassionate Listening delegates. Plus, stepping outside of the ritualized space of Compassionate Listening seemed to also be a factor in weakening the intention. As they relaxed into a sense of normalcy, the argumentative aspect of Jewish culture reemerged and gave shape to the interaction. This account reveals the way that identity can shape various encounters along with how we interpret and respond to them.

Some Jewish delegates expressed anxiety about how to bring home the stories from their experiences in ways that would not lead to disruption in their families and communities. At the center of this concern is a fear about how the *transformative* aspects of the trip might put them at odds with the views of the folks back home. The

following offers an example of how this concern was playing out in the life of one of the delegates:

I was telling you the other night about the email that I got from my wife. She had received all these emails from me about my experience with, um, powerful and courageous Palestinians. And she expressed concern that I would come back so pro-Palestinian that I would turn off all of our Jewish community. And we have worked so hard to be a part of that community.

Responding to what was routinely on the minds of many, during the final group check-ins, Leah shared ideas and suggestions about ways to negotiate potentially difficult encounters. During the April 1999 delegation Leah aimed to put people's concerns into perspective by saying how much the consciousness of North America has changed since she first started doing public speaking in the mid-eighties. As she put it, "I haven't seen a *lady in blue* in the States in about ten years." "You haven't met my father" was the immediate reply from one delegate, suggesting again that the concerns that the delegates were feeling often arise from situations very close to home.

THE ARAB DELEGATES

This section looks at the five Arab delegates who joined during two of the Compassionate Listening delegations. These delegates share some notable similarities with their Jewish counterparts. They can be said to share a curiosity and openness about different perspectives on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. There is a similar willingness to listen to viewpoints with which they may disagree. They can also be said to care about the conflict's constructive resolution. Again similar to their Jewish counterparts, the identities of the Palestinian delegates, in particular—the stories that

they tell about who they are—are linked to the region and to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Because of the small number of Palestinians that have traveled with the delegations, I have limited data to draw from when it comes to generalizing about how Palestinians make sense of their experiences. For this reason, historical differences between the Jewish and Palestinian Diasporas provide an important context for understanding how this trip figures in the experience of these delegates.

It is a source of sadness and resentment among Palestinians that the Arab community in general has not demonstrated much solidarity with or support for the Palestinian people (Rubin 1999, 138). Given this, Leah was quick to note the significance of an Arab-American from Kuwait signing up for a delegation. Travelling with the April 1999 delegation was Munteha Shukrallah. At the time Munteha was completing her BA degree in International Relations. A bi-lingual English and Arabic speaker, passionate about the Middle East, Munteha went on to intern with the Compassionate Listening Project following the April 1999 delegation and after that went on to become delegation leader for the Syria/Lebanon track and Vice President of the Board of Directors for the project. While Munteha's involvement with the Compassionate Listening Project can be said to represent a significant break with an historical theme. At the same time, there is little evidence to suggest that her interest and commitments have much resonance within the larger Arab-American community.

Also on the April 1999 trip was the first Palestinian American delegate to travel with the Compassionate Listening Project. Twenty-year-old Suzanne Sukkar was born in the United States from parents who are from Nablus and Ramallah. This

was her first trip to the region. Suzanne recommended the trip to her cousin, Ahmed, a college student, born in Michigan from parents who left the region as a result of the conflict. He was one out of three Palestinians on the November 1999 trip. Also travelling with the November 1999 delegation were two Palestinian delegates who were born and raised in the West Bank. Nahida Salem came to the United States in 1967 from Ramallah. Fairouz left Jerusalem to marry her husband who had been living in Michigan since the Six-Day War. These four Palestinian delegates represent the two generations of Palestinian refugees and immigrants that have come from the region. Their historic locations have important implications for their relationship with the conflict and to the project.

One key feature of Palestinian identity, particularly Palestinian national identity, is that it has been forged directly through the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Zionism and the land of Israel may figure large in Jewish narrative, but these are not universally defining features of what it means to be Jewish. Many Jews, some former delegates of this project, for instance, reject Zionism as a part of their identity. While Palestinians have inhabited the region for centuries, Palestinian identity, particularly Palestinian national identity was forged out of the 1948 war that resulted in the establishment of Israel, and the creation of 800,000 Palestinian refugees. Known to the Palestinians as Nakba, *the Catastrophe*, this event defines the beginning of the Palestinian Nationalist struggle. Compared with Jews who have three thousand years of diverse history from which to draw their identity, Palestinian identity is rooted primarily in two generations of exile and occupation.

Out of this history, important similarities and differences between Palestinian and Jewish delegates emerged. While many Jewish delegates have followed the conflict and have strong ties to Israel, equal numbers reported being surprised and shocked to discover what was happening in the region. (“How could my people, my Jewish people, be responsible for the oppression of others?”) This surprise stands in contrast to those Palestinian delegates who arrived with an intimate, enmeshed relationship to the conflict acquired through having been born in the region and having close relatives who remain there. This is true for both Naheeda and Farouz who return regularly to visit family. An expression of how this difference in location may serve to shape a different experience for these delegates is offered through a comment Naheeda made during an exasperated moment about mid-way through the trip: “I know we’re here to listen. But, I’ve been listening for 35 years, and I’m tired of both sides.” While this same linkage to the region does not hold true in the same way for the first generation of American-born Palestinians, the directness of the connection was expressed consistently by Ahmed, who used what his father taught him about the conflict as a consistent point of reference for his experiences throughout the trip.

Reflected also in how Palestinian and Jewish delegates made sense of the trip, are the two key narratives that each side was raised with about the conflict. Many of the Jewish delegates, who arrive with little knowledge of the conflict, also describe growing up in households where a central theme is about how Israel is their homeland. The conflict with the Palestinians is relayed in terms of Arab and Palestinian aggression towards and hatred of the Jewish people. Israel is portrayed as

a beleaguered, small country surrounded by angry, hostile Arab nations who all want to drive Israelis into the sea and Israel out of existence. As described above, a key theme for many of the Jewish delegates who come on the trip is a questioning of this narrative that they grew up with. As one Jewish delegate put it:

I grew up in a Jewish family and I heard a lot about how Israel was my homeland and got a lot of information about who the Palestinians are, who the Israelis are and what's going on, and, that *we* are right. And it never really seemed like it so I would really like to know more about what's really happening.

Similarly, Ahmed also said that one reason he came on the trip is to question the narrative with which he was raised. For Ahmed, this narrative was centered primarily on the ending of the occupation, establishing a Palestinian state and resolving the Palestinian refugee problem. Towards the end of the trip, he reflected on how his experiences have informed his skepticism about what he learned from his father growing up.

As I was growing up, I would hear my Dad talk about the conflict and how there would never be peace. And I've always been optimistic, but like I'm seeing finally the roots of his pessimism about the opportunities for peace.

Ahmed goes on to say how he also observed a lot of reasons to have hope for peace during the trip. Nonetheless, it is interesting to note that at the end of the trip, his central focus remains the resolution of the conflict, defined in terms of the structural issues—ending the occupation, establishing a Palestinian state and resolving the refugee problem—that most Palestinians perceive as the root of the conflict.

Bringing the different social, cultural and historic locations into light provides a context for seeing how the Compassionate Listening Project may resonate differently across different groups. Leah stated her lack of outreach into Palestinian

communities as a reason for which there are not more Palestinians signing up for delegations. While that could be true, it can also be observed that the project has a resonance within the Jewish community that facilitates this word of mouth growth. While there exists an abundance of organized trips to Israel available for Jewish Americans, very few offer the kind of direct encounter with the conflict that the Compassionate Listening Project does. For Jewish Americans who are troubled by the conflict and who seek to better understand it, or to constructively engage with it, these trips present an attractive opportunity. Conversely, because so many Palestinian-Americans are either refugees or the children of refugees, an opportunity to get to know the conflict is likely not to carry a parallel resonance within this community.

Nahida is one of the founding members of the Jewish-Palestinian Livingroom Dialogue group, and as such has become an active public spokesperson for dialogue between the two communities. She said that it was her dialogue group that brought her on the trip. As she puts it, “in my dialogue group we do a lot of talking. I’m hoping that this trip will teach me better how to listen.” Similarly, Farouz is also involved with inter-faith Israeli-Palestinian dialogue at home in Michigan. She became intrigued by the concept of Compassionate Listening and what she might have to learn from it. Although their motives may sound similar to those of the other delegates—the goal of expanding peacemaking capacities—there is little evidence to suggest that these motives are shared more generally within the Palestinian American community in the way that they are for the Jewish American constituents. While investigating the reasons for this difference go beyond the scope of this study, a look at how asymmetries between adversaries in conflict relationships play out generally

in dialogue and coexistence work, may offer some important clues about how meaning is linked to context. More specifically, it may offer some insight about why the Compassionate Listening Project may not be carrying the same resonance within the Palestinian-American community that it is among segments of Jewish Americans. An examination of issues related to dialogue and coexistence work may offer further insight.

Although human relations approaches to dialogue and peacebuilding are generally heralded as constructive forms of intervention, scholars and practitioners who are critical of the approach look at how dialogue serves to smooth relations while often doing little to address the structural roots of conflict. Mohamed Abu-Nimer has researched this phenomenon through his study of co-existence efforts in Israel (1999). He challenges common assumptions about the inherent good in dialogue and communication between conflicting parties. His research reveals the limited degree to which most dialogue efforts address institutional and structural injustices. Of concern is how peacemaking interventions in arenas of protracted ethnic conflict may serve to reinforce social and structural asymmetries of dominance and control. While traveling within the West Bank and Gaza I would hear this phenomenon commonly referred to as *normalization*. Palestinians often cite *normalization* as a reason for resisting or refusing certain peacebuilding initiatives. This dynamic helps to explain why weaker parties in a conflict may often be reluctant dialogue participants. While Palestinian Americans living within the United States may enjoy many of the middle-class privileges that their Jewish counterparts do, Amy Hubbard's longitudinal study of a Middle East dialogue group within the United States (1999) revealed importantly that,

regardless of class and status, Arab Americans as a group do see themselves as being much less influential than Jewish Americans.

Further, research reveals that whenever discrimination is a core feature shaping relations between groups, those with the least power (those who are the object of discrimination) are consistently the more reluctant participants in dialogue (Abu-Nimer 1999, Hubbard 1999). This in part may help to explain why the Compassionate Listening Project appears to be a less attractive opportunity for Palestinian-Americans. While advocates of dialogue and coexistence work emphasize the re-humanizing of the Other through establishing and building relationships, another function of dialogue has to do with the learning that takes place with regards to the daily realities and experiences of the different groups. Few will argue that we don't all have something to learn from one another, regardless of which groups are traditionally seen to occupy positions of greater privilege. It can be a profound revelation for an African American, for instance, to begin to see Jewish Americans as part of a distinct ethnic group, as opposed to being viewed as part of the White oppressive majority with which they are usually associated (Felman 2001, 151). This example demonstrates the kinds of shift in consciousness that have the potential of reshaping relations between groups that have historically adversarial relations with one another.

At the same time, years in women's studies classrooms, combined with my experience as an intercultural communications trainer/facilitator have sensitized me to how, in mixed settings, groups with minority status can find themselves with the job of educating majority groups about the lived realities of sexism, racism, homophobia

or classism. Whether it is women educating men about male privilege; Blacks educating Whites about white privilege; gays educating straight people about heterosexual privilege; or the poor educating the economically privileged about the conditions of poverty, this dynamic can have the similar effect of reproducing asymmetries in group relations rather than challenging or transforming them. With this in mind, it seems important to ask if Palestinian-Americans have an equal and symmetrical opportunity to learn and grow from the experience of the delegations. Expressing the value of a mixed group as opposed to the all-Jewish group, Leah shared with me: “The Jewish Narrative is just so large, it is helpful to expose it to other narratives.” Importantly this comment makes reference to groups mixed with all sorts of non-Jewish identities. Yet, in the case where the trip is composed predominately of Jewish and Palestinian participants, this comment is suggestive of how the Palestinian-American presence may function primarily to the benefit of the Jewish constituents.

Leah shared with me that one of the reasons she valued having three Palestinian-Americans in the May 2000 delegation was for how their presence brought the larger conflict into the group. As she put it in her post-trip report: “Our Palestinian participants added a very special element to the trip. I would like all of our trips to be mixed delegations—it’s so enriching to experience things through so many different lenses!” While, many confirmed this to be true in their experience, tensions between Jewish and Palestinian delegates was notably absent throughout the trip. While they may have brought their different lenses, the conflict did not appear to playing out between delegates. From my observations, relations between delegates

were consistently amicable throughout this trip. Friendly, affectionate relations between delegates developed during the first couple of days of the trips and continued for the duration. Naheeda, Farouz and Ahmed could consistently be observed paired up in conversation with different delegates. Farouz and Naheeda were especially affectionate with other female delegates and as such, were often seen walking with hooked arms down the streets or with someone cuddled close to them during the check-ins. Displays of physical affection as such are especially common in Arab cultures as an expression of friendship. At no instance, either within the group or privately, did I note a hint of tension between Jewish and Palestinian delegates during the trip. Delegates were joined in the solidarity of being there together with a common intention and purpose. Enveloped by the immediacy of the larger conflict and joined with the common goal of listening, the focus was not relations between the Jewish and Palestinian delegates. Instead the focus was a deepened understanding of the conflict as it plays out in the region. As stated above, Palestinian-Americans have a different narrative relationship to the conflict. As such, their reflections and comments naturally served to enlarge the discursive parameters of how encounters were being processed within the group.

The Palestinian-American delegates brought the conflict to the group in yet another significant way. On two distinct occasions the itinerary for the trip was altered due to the presence of Palestinian-American delegates. The group had been invited to visit the home of one of the residents of Kiryat-Arba, the controversial Israeli settlement located on the Eastern edge of the West Bank city of Hebron. At the last minute, our host, Sara Nachson communicated that the invitation would only be

for the Jewish participants. This decision stirred an uproar of conflicted feelings within the Jewish members of the group as they processed the moral and political implications of this exclusion. In the end, one of the Jewish delegates decided to stay behind in solidarity with her Palestinian cohorts. As an alternative to the Kiryat-Arba visit, the five of us (myself included as another non-Jewish delegate) spent the afternoon with a Palestinian family that is a long-time friend to the project. What stood out about this incident was the degree to which the Jewish participants struggled with it, while the Palestinians seemed to take the event in stride. “Don’t worry about us, we are used to this kind of thing,” was the sentiment repeatedly expressed by the Palestinian delegates.

A second event occurred when our group was crossing the border into Gaza. It turned out that we entered on a day when the border was closed for Israelis. This posed a problem for the two Israeli citizens traveling with us and additionally for Farouz, one of our Palestinian delegates who was considered an Israeli citizen because she holds a Jerusalem I.D. card. After a long delay and much persistent diplomacy on the part of Leah, the Israeli soldiers in charge at the border-crossing granted an exception for the two Israeli citizens traveling with us, but they would not do the same for our Palestinian delegate. In the end, arrangements were made to take Farouz back to Jerusalem, where she spent three days with her family. Similar to before, this delegate emphasized her assurance that she was fine, used to this sort of thing, that we needn’t worry for her. Meanwhile, Jewish delegates commented on how *informative* the incident was, how, especially given the rapport they felt with

Farouz, it helped them to feel the daily experience of the occupation. Less clear is what Farouz gained from the experience.

These observations are aimed at offering some context for understanding how and why the Compassionate Listening Project may be resonating very differently within the Palestinian North-American community than it does among Jewish Americans. Because I have limited data to draw from, I consider social, cultural and historical factors along with known features and dynamics in dialogue work in general as a basis for my analysis and speculation. In this approach to looking at how this community is resonating differently to the project and its methodology is an assumption about how the value and effectiveness of any peacebuilding effort must be examined by considering its social, cultural and historical contexts. Based on this, although Leah and the other project leaders expressed enthusiasm about what these Arab delegates added to the trip, importantly the project was not designed with their needs, concerns, culture and history in mind. A possible key reason that more Arabs have not signed on for delegations is that the trips are not really *for* them. The project therefore does not serve them in the same way that it does its Jewish delegates. In the following section, I turn to the *others* that have traveled with the Compassionate Listening project. Given the absence of a common identity among this group, placing this group into a social cultural and historical context, as I demonstrate, becomes an interesting challenge with potentially important implications.

THE OTHERS

This section looks at the delegates who have traveled with the project who do not identify as Jewish, Arab or Palestinian American. This is not a large group. Of the

five first Compassionate Listening delegation trips that I examine in this dissertation, out of a total of 75 participants, twelve delegates, (not including myself who joined on two trips), fall into the category of *other identities*. Seven of these *others* traveled with the April 1999 delegation, the other five were with the November trip of that same year. These delegates can be described as a group of individuals who have come on the trip for an assortment of distinct, idiosyncratic reasons. They are all well educated and generally left leaning in their political orientation. Around half have an interest in the region and the conflict through teaching and/or social justice work. Some motives are more personal than political. And in a few cases, as will be seen, the motives for joining are anything but clear. The range of familiarity and knowledge of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict also varies among this group. Those who write and teach on topics related to the conflict stand in contrast to one delegate in particular who, in her own words, “arrived pretty much clueless.” The majority seems to fall somewhere in-between.

In order to present a sketch-like profile of the April 1999 delegation, I referenced a bio page for all the participants who traveled with this delegation. Prior to departure, delegates are asked to compose a short biography (75 words) saying something about who they are. Leah has developed the practice of compiling these bios and sending them to everyone signed-up for the trip. The information in these bios is self selected, based on what these delegates have decided is relevant to share about them selves in relation to joining a trip. Based on what can be read from these short biographies, a sketchy profile of the group emerges. Out of the seven, three delegates identify themselves as Quaker, one as Methodist and another shared that

she has an affiliation with a Zen Buddhist community. One has been a full time peace and justice activist for eleven years. Working for the War Resisters League, she has traveled several times to the Middle East, including Palestine and Israel and she frequently writes and speaks about her experiences. Another writer and activist works for the Fellowship of Reconciliation, has spent extended time in the region and has written extensively about issues related to the peace process. Don is a retired teacher, a veteran of the World War II, and has traveled a lot. Victoria is a retired government service employee who was studying Arabic and working towards a degree in international relations. Also a student of the Arabic language, Marina is active around Middle East social justice issues through the American Friends Service Committee. She also participated in a 1996 Earthstewards delegation with Leah to Israel and is on the Board of Advisors for the project. Theresa gives seminars and keynote presentations in workplaces across America on non-defensive communication skills, conflict resolution and teambuilding.

Because I got to know them personally while traveling with the November 1999 delegation, I am able to present a fuller profile of these five *other* delegates. Again, the distinctness of each of these individuals and their stories—how it is they explain who they are and their reasons for joining the project—stands out as the defining feature for this group. Margo McAuliffe was a retired high school math teacher who decided to join the project after viewing the project’s documentary “Children of Abraham.” Her interest in conflict resolution came from experiences teaching in a large, multi-ethnic public high school. It was the methodology of Compassionate Listening that really got her attention. Trish Nelson was authoring a

book about people who are examples of compassionate living in the midst of challenging circumstances. Someone had recommended Leah as a person she should interview. She followed through by phoning Leah, and by the end of the conversation was signed up to join the next upcoming delegation. David Andrus taught in the department of international relations at the University of Southern California and had a number of affiliations with peace and justice organizations. He served, for instance, on the Middle East Peace Education Committee of the American Friends Service Committee. His intention for joining the trip was to get a deeper understanding of the political and social and economic realities related to the conflict. Traveling with his video camera, he collected material for classroom use throughout the trip. He was also drawn to the trip because of its methodology, which he explains:

Compassionate Listening really resonated because for quite a while I've been reading a lot of Buddhist literature, trying to learn how to get a better handle on how to risk and do what Leah calls "Compassionate Listening," which is to listen to somebody who I might violently disagree with and stay in the moment, stay in the conversation, not let my emotions run off, not let my ears close down, in the process of trying to come up with a response, but just to listen. I've been trying to do that, because most of my courses that I teach are very emotional, I really go into very controversial areas, and I have a LOT of controversy in the classroom,

Primarily drawn to the project for what he would learn about the situation on the ground, the Compassionate Listening component was to him, a bonus. Dave learned about the trip through his friend Bill Thompson, who was also one of the five *others* who traveled with this delegation.

Bill Thompson had the distinction of being the only delegate who, as of November 1999, had traveled three times to the region with Leah Green. A faculty member at the University of Michigan in Dearborn, Thompson teaches in the field of

clinical psychology and violence/nonviolence. Dearborn Michigan happens to be home to the largest Arab American community in the United States. But, at the time that Thompson took his first trip with Leah Green—still a part of the Earthstewards Network—he claims that he knew very little about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. His wife had become involved with Earth Stewards and he became intrigued. In January of 2000, after returning home from the region, I asked Thompson to put me on his mailing list. Since that time, I have received over 750 mailings about the Middle East from him. He posts articles and action alerts having to do with violations of human rights in the West Bank, Gaza and in Iraq. In 1999 he and Dave Andrus joined the Compassionate Listening delegation after just having spent a month touring in Iraq with “Voices in the Wilderness,” an organization that, prior to the U.S. led war, was committed to ending sanctions against Iraq. At the time, Bill told me he spent on average about ten hours a week reading and selecting articles to post, writing letters and making phone calls, mainly to politicians and then composing his Urgent Action messages directing others to do the same.

How Thompson linked his activism to the Compassionate Listening delegations first became evident to me when our delegation met with Ahmed Abdul Rahman, Cabinet Secretary General for the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) in Gaza. During this meeting, I learned that Thompson first met Rahman in 1998 while traveling with what was to be Leah’s last MidEast Citizen Diplomacy mission, just before establishing the Compassionate Listening Project. Since that time, Thompson had been writing personal letters to Rahman regarding specific human rights violations by the PNA. Referencing the letters, Thompson engaged Rahman about his

concerns: “I know a number of people back in the States are concerned when we hear about violations of human rights by the PNA.” What appeared to me through the brief dialogue that ensued between Thompson and Rahman was the degree to which Thompson saw this meeting as an opportunity for diplomatic exchange. His aim was to impress on Rahman perspectives and concerns held within the grass roots human rights community. For instance, Thompson raised the topic of scheduled upcoming elections within the Palestinian territories. In doing so, he pressed candidly for an open election process:

It is my guess that how [the election] is handled by the PNA and the other parties will be a very critical event in terms of how Palestine as a whole will be received....I just want to encourage you to be very open in that process. Even to allow—if there are errors to be made, to allow those errors to occur in the sight of openness....I’m used to American campaigns where people say some pretty outrageous things without danger of arrest or without danger of any kind of impediment in that way. And I realize that there is a kind of fine line there. But, I think how this occurs will be very important in terms of how Palestine is viewed in the rest of the world.

In the process of sharing with me how he views his relationship with Rahman, Bill expressed what he sees as the value of citizen diplomacy. He told me that what he does as an activist is plant seeds.

That’s basically what I do in my life, I think. And most of them die. But some of them come to fruition. And that is really nice when they do. And the thing is you never know what’s going to happen. Like this relationship with Rahman. You know, I think I’ve got some kind of relationship with that guy now. I think that when I write to him he knows who I am and so he responds in reasonable ways. And I have to tell you that I don’t think its irrelevant that when Sarraj was arrested—and actually Gazi Hamad was arrested in the last six months or so too—that not just me, but many people wrote to get them released, and they were released.

Importantly, he does not view himself in isolation of others who share his perspectives and concerns. Bill is linked to a web of activists who act in similar ways.

Given his history with the project, Bill was able to reflect on how the addition of a listening component has made a difference to the project. From his perspective, the commitment to listening changes the character of the delegations in important ways. Delegates arrive less attached to a specific agenda and more predisposed to learning. More specifically, they arrive more predisposed to see the profound imbalance of power and the profound human rights abuses. As a clinical psychologist, he relates the value he places on listening to his understanding of the therapeutic process where—through a relationship based on listening and reflection—a transformation can occur. His notion of transformation is very much influenced by the writings of Ghandi and Martin Luther King. In this regard he relates Compassionate Listening to active non-violence. From this view, the project sets up the conditions to support a self-conversion process for the speakers and listeners alike, a movement towards an evolutionary shift in the direction of non-violence and justice seeking perspectives. In providing an example of this, he reveals how he is actively making sense of various encounters.

[Ghazi Hamad] was a man who three years ago, although he was stating that he was not doing violence, he was not telling anybody else not to do it. In other words, my violence was acceptable to him, not only in terms of a tactic but I think in terms of a spiritual, if you will, retaliation or revenge that was okay. It could be justified. And now I don't think he thinks that. I don't know. But, I think it's striking that he has moved into the Islamic Salvation Front, a party which sounds to me like Hamas without violence. That is what I heard. So, he's gotten some tools somewhere and actually I think our delegation might have been helpful in that, in giving him some tools so that he could convert himself.

As a former Hamas member, Ghazi Hamad is a representative of the splinter group that formed the Islamic Salvation Front in 1995. The establishment of a political party by some senior Hamas members represented a “calculated participation” in the state

building processes that were put into motion by the Oslo Agreements (Mishal and Avraham 2000, 113-120). This strategy was seen in large part as a way of retaining the sympathy and support of many Palestinians who were placing their hopes in the peace process to end their social and economic hardships (47). Once again, Thompson is following the conflict through the relationships he has established. In this regard, each encounter is seen as a diplomatic opportunity and an intervention.

In an edited collection of writings by Gene Knudsen Hoffman (2003) is a story about an exchange between Gene and Ghazi Hamad that happened in the moments just after Ghazi had spoken to the 1998 Earthstewards delegation. Bill Thompson was also there. When speaking with the whole group Ghazi announced that he had been rethinking violence as an effective strategy for Palestinians. Given the horrendous conditions under which Palestinians lived, he saw a violent response as something still justified, but he no longer saw it as doing any good. At the end of their time together, as the group was gathering up and leaving Gene went over to speak with Ghazi for a few moments. Here is how she describes the exchange:

Our time with Ghazi Ahmed Hamad ended...I went up and spoke to him before I left. I told him, "You have great gifts—you can be a leader to your people. I hope you will explore nonviolence—it may be helpful to you." "You sound just like my mother," he replied. I told him I'd be glad to have him as a son. We laughed. He reached out to me; we embraced.

It was on the bus ride coming from Gaza in 1999 that I first heard this story. Bill Thompson was standing next to Gene during the encounter and clearly takes pleasure in telling about the experience. This brief exchange is suggestive of the ongoing conversation occurring within Palestinian society about how best to pursue the Palestinian nationalist struggle. Apart from his enjoyment of the story, Thompson

was interested in speculating about how the exchange might have served to reinforce perspectives embracing non-violence.

In contrast to Thompson's activism, the final delegate from the November 1999 delegation with an identity that falls into the category of *other*, has a very personal story about her relationship to the Compassionate Listening project and what happened for her during the trip. Inger Eitzbach describes the Compassionate Listening delegation as a "real transformative experience." A brief look at her life reveals a storyline of transformative experiences, moving all in the direction of an expanded notion of what it means to take right action as an individual embedded within engulfing political realities. Inger was born in 1932 in Germany. Throughout the Second World War she was active in Hitler's youth movement. At the end of the war, as she witnessed the release of Jews from the Nazi concentration camps, the cruel atrocity of what had been happening under the Nazi regime was literally before her eyes. The experience was devastating. After the war, Inger moved to New York City, where she has lived ever since. She links the fact of never having become a U.S. citizen to wanting to remain connected to Germany and the reconciliation process. As part of her atonement for her part in what happened to the Jews, she became an active supporter of Zionism. In 1988 she came to Israel and worked for several months as a volunteer on a Kibbutz. Shortly after arriving she had an experience that provoked her to get to know the Palestinians and their perspective on the conflict. She describes what happened:

I had arranged to be a volunteer in Israel, serving on an army base for a month. And this army base was between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem and what I did mostly was cleaning Uzi guns. And it somehow didn't occur to me what these guns meant, but then after two weeks I had a weekend free and I took

the bus to Jerusalem and at that time, this was a month, or two months after the Intifada had started and the entire city of Jerusalem was closed down, there was a strike, all the stores were closed. And I walked down King David Street and I saw on every roof top soldiers with those Uzi guns, which I had cleaned. And then all of a sudden I saw that there must be a side that I hadn't seen before in my admiration for the state of Israel.

Following this experience she began to work more broadly for human rights concerns. Once back home in New York City, she became an active member of the social justice committee at her Unitarian Church. Her daughter first told her about the Compassionate Listening project, but it wasn't until she heard about the project for a second time from a friend that she finally looked up the web site and became "enchanted." Drawn by how the project would invite her to engage many viewpoints and the complexity of issues, she made the decision to come. She talks about having been "ready" when she heard about the project for a second time. Intuitively she knew that the trip was going to be an emotional "firestorm" for her.

At one point during the trip, Inger had become so emotionally exhausted and depressed that she didn't think she could get out of bed. Remembering that there were two clinical psychologists traveling with the trip, she reluctantly asked for help. The event precipitating this emotional collapse happened during the visit to Beit Ein, the religious settlement where we listened as Rachel spoke about her experiences living in a German concentration camp for a year during the Holocaust. During the exchange of questions and comments that comes at the end of every listening session, Inger spoke up and introduced herself, revealing her involvements as a child during the war and then asked if Rachel could ever forgive her. The answer was no. Inger eventually came to realize that since the war her life has been spent seeking to be

forgiven for what had happened. What she took in at that moment was the pointlessness of this pursuit:

One of the psychologists explained to me that people who have suffered a trauma very often arrange their lives around the trauma. And you can't remove the trauma or the memory of the trauma because this entire life is going to collapse. And in a sense that happened to me because I had arranged my life around the Holocaust and now, all of a sudden this thing was taken. And I felt that there were several days when I was absolutely wiped out. I didn't know where I was or what I was. And what my purpose is. And, I felt really empty. That was in Gaza, I think. That was in Gaza. Was it Gaza? Or was it somewhere in the West Bank?

The transformation that Inger claimed to undergo appeared to have a literal, physical dimension. Towards the end of the trip, there was consensus within the group on how Inger suddenly looked many years younger. She was glowing, carrying herself with a renewed energy and lightness that was repeatedly the object of comment. Here is how she makes sense of what happened:

Somehow very slowly, something developed. Some insight developed. And that is that the Holocaust really in the final analysis was not a German thing, it was a human thing.

Her identification with the Holocaust had psychologically compelled her to stand by Israelis in a way that made it difficult for her to fully respond to the human rights violations that she learned about for which Israel was responsible. She spoke to me at length about how meaningful this transformation was for her and what it allowed her to see:

If I wanted to do something about [human rights violations], about anything, I have to let go of the Holocaust. I have to go deeper. Actually, one of the things Carol [Hwochinsky] said that impressed me—I don't know, I may have heard it before—that you cannot solve the problem on the problem's level. You have to either dig deeper or you have to rise higher. And I don't know whether this is digging deeper or rising higher, but the common denominator in all these atrocities, whether it's the Germans against the Jews, or the Jews

against the Palestinians, or the Palestinians against the Palestinians, or whether it is the United States against Iraq, the common denominator in all of this is the suffering of individuals.

In order to get to this more universal narrative of human suffering as a result of injustice, Inger had to confront deep psychological issues related to German/Jewish reconciliation. Significantly, Inger did not speak about any ties to a larger community directly grappling with German/Jewish reconciliation. For Inger, being free of the Holocaust meant being free from a narrative of personal responsibility. This meant she was now released to act to address injustices of all kinds, everywhere. While the personal triumph of this, as well as the potential social value of her future ability to act may go unquestioned, the isolated and personal nature of her experience does raise some interesting questions about the link between personal and social transformation.

CONCLUSION

During the sermon that Nikki Landau delivered to her temple on the second day of Rosh Hashanah, she told the story about the tragic death of her high school friend on a beach in Tel Aviv as a result of a terrorist attack and how the Compassionate Listening delegation allowed her to revisit and transform this experience. Days after she delivered the sermon, the full text was sent via email to the hundreds of those who are on Leah Green's Compassionate Listening list-serve. The subject of the message read: "Another ripple from the Compassionate Listening Project." There are at least two potentially transformative narrative threads in Nikki's sermon during the High Holidays of Rosh Hashanah. One has to do with North

American narratives about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and how to view and respond to terrorism. Nikki's story is a direct challenge to mainstream responses to terror, which characterize Palestinians as terrorists and terrorists as the unmitigated enemy. Second, it is a narrative that challenges, more generally, the western cultural response to conflict, which tends to champion revenge and power over forgiveness and compassion.

Further, as news of Nikki's sermon is sent to everyone on Leah's list-serve, this news flash serves to generate a story about how delegates transfer their experiences into their communities once they return home. Importantly, Nikki's story is one of many that has become part of the project's oral and written folklore. One of Leah's many talents is as a story teller. When asked, out comes story after story all giving testimony to the project's effectiveness. Similarly, other delegates as well tell their stories about how the project has meaning for them and the way the project has been transformative for those involved with it. Importantly, this activity is arguably in itself transforming conflict narratives and introducing more constructive narratives.

Throughout this chapter I've demonstrated the numerous ways that storytelling is an important feature of the Compassionate Listening Project. First off, North American listeners hear stories that are told by the Israelis and Palestinians that they encounter during the delegations. Second, as Nikki's example demonstrates, personally transformative experiences are translated into stories that delegates bring home and share with the larger communities to which they are connected. These stories get told in public venues, with defined audiences. Importantly, these stories that they tell sometimes are at odds with certain cultural narratives, such as,

mainstream Jewish narratives that conclude Palestinians are dangerous and not prepared or willing to make peace with Israel. Third, by circulating certain stories about encounters and experiences related to the project, the project itself is engaged in the generation of a kind of folklore about the project, its meaning, place and significance. An examination of the meaning making that happens through storytelling offers important clues as to the ways that the project may be serving to expand conflict narratives in constructive ways.

Noteworthy about the stories that are being told by the delegates about their experiences is that they are potentially generating new forms of shared meanings and shared understandings. When new stories are introduced into arenas of public discourse they carry the potential of destabilizing the narratives through which the conflict is being perpetuated. Extending beyond the individual, it is the discursive communities that these delegates are connected to that then become the possible arenas of transformation. Nikki, along with many of the Jewish delegates, bring their stories home to their families, their Synagogues and other forums of Jewish community. The delegates who are educators bring their stories into formal education classrooms. For delegates such as Judith Kolokoff and Bill Thompson, their stories are offered into the discursive pool of narrative that makes up the disparate world of human rights activism. Seen in their larger social context, many of these delegates offer a case study in the connection between personal and social transformation.

The above examples suggest that context has everything to do with the transformative potential of the stories being generated. In the case of individuals for whom their connection to wider discursive communities is less clear, Inger Etzbach

stands out. While the personal significance of her transformation may be unquestionable, it is not so obvious what discursive community the *story* of her transformation may feed/seed. Further, with regards to the Palestinian delegates, a lack of data provides little basis for generalizing about the potentially transformative stories that they are generating about their experiences. At the same time, a consideration of how they are historically located suggests that these experiences are far less informative to the collective experience of Palestinian Americans and their relationship to the conflict. Finally, the stories that are being generated about how these delegations may be serving to transform “individual hearts and minds” *there*, in the places that these delegates visit, deserve to be examined in light of how those that these delegates meet and listen to are making sense of these encounters. In the following chapter, therefore, I take a close look at the individuals and organizations on the itineraries of the Compassionate Listening delegations.

CHAPTER SIX

DIPLOMATIC AGENDAS

This chapter examines the world that the Compassionate Listening delegates visit. It takes a closer look at the shape, texture, tone and content of these two-week journeys. In doing so, this chapter adds to the complex mosaic of context, meanings and experiences related to the Compassionate Listening Project. More specifically, this chapter examines where the Compassionate Listening delegates go, whom they listen to, and what they hear. In doing so, I add a crucial layer of understanding as to the nature and character of the Compassionate Listening Project, and its role in the peacebuilding process between Arabs and Jews. An examination of who is commonly included in the itineraries also brings into focus the standpoints, ideologies and strategies of the various speakers. In short, it reveals the content of the various messages that the Compassionate Listeners hear during their trip. Most importantly, a look at how those that meet with project delegates give meaning to the encounters and to the project brings further insight into how this project is interfacing and interacting with a wider world of peacebuilders and peacebuilding strategies.

This time the project is being examined from the de-centered perspective of the ‘objects’ of listening. The Compassionate Listening Project interacts within and among a broad field of actors, standpoints, strategies and ideas. Through these meetings and through the act of listening to the people present at these meetings, the encounters serve to give representation to a selection of perspectives and standpoints. It is significant that the various perspectives of the speakers represent a range of

standpoints both on the conflict and on how best to make peace between Israelis and Palestinians. As such, a careful look at the content of these journeys reveals some of the contradictions, tensions, disjunctures and continuities at play within this multifaceted world. Further, by examining how these differently located speakers give meaning to the encounters, I reveal more clues about the buried assumptions regarding social change that motivate and guide the activities of these speakers and what it is that they have to say.

The pages that follow are organized around two major headings. I first examine the itineraries themselves, looking at both the people who meet with the project and the content of their messages. I begin with some general observations about the itinerary by examining the choices Leah makes when composing an itinerary, and the various factors that influence these choices. From there I lay out a discussion of the history of the Israeli peace movement as a way of giving context to several of the speakers. The Israeli speakers are then discussed in two subsections that look at those who represent Israel's left and then those who represent Israel's right. A section devoted to looking at the Palestinian speakers follows this. Here, the context, background and content of these meetings are folded together into an integrated discussion of who these speakers are and how to discern their relative locations within Palestinian society. I finish off this discussion of the itineraries with a section that looks at the Israeli and Palestinian speakers who represent first track actors. This includes individuals who serve and have served in official positions and roles within the Israeli government, the Palestinian Authority and the Palestinian Liberation Organization. The second major heading is devoted to looking at the themes that

emerged from examining how these various speakers were giving meaning to the project and to the encounters. Finally, in the conclusion to this chapter, I summarize the diverse and various agendas that the speakers bring to the project with an emphasis on the unarticulated theories of social change and their implications.

THE ITINERARY

Composing an itinerary for the Compassionate Listening Project implies making choices. By examining these choices, the porous and shifting boundaries of the project become visible. As previously described, Leah is driven by a complex agenda. She is interested in exposing North American delegates to an alternative perspective of the conflict, a perspective that emphasizes injustices while not feeding into the polarization that characterizes the conflict. She navigates this difficult terrain with Compassionate Listening, a tool, or rather, a practice, which invites listeners and speakers alike into a different kind of relationship. This different kind of relationship, is one which aims at being, in the words of Gene Knudson Hoffman, “in touch with both sides, understanding the suffering and fears of each” (Hoffman 2001, xii). Yet, as most, (including Leah Green), will agree, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict cannot be simply parsed into a conflict between two sides. Multiple actors and multiple perspectives are involved in a social conflict that plays out at every level of the two societies. In other words, the itinerary, like all other aspects of the project, must be examined in the social, political and cultural contexts from which it has evolved.

More than once I heard Leah say that she doesn't like to do cookie-cutter trips. She explains that because there are so many interesting people to meet and listen to, it keeps the trips more alive and interesting to include continual variation.

Additionally, many of the individuals that the groups meet with have active public lives. Because of this, Leah must roll with the hectic, uncertain flow of other people's schedules, while doing the jigsaw work of weaving a tightly packed schedule during the course of each two-week trip. Being dependent upon a speaker's availability means that even the regulars are not always available each time. This suggests that in addition to keeping things interesting, Leah must maintain a sufficiently wide net of relationships so that she can weather the unexpected. Within this pragmatic and personal bias for variation, there is a core group of regulars, and a pattern of relationship building that characterizes the trips.

It is significant that the majority of the regulars on the itinerary are actively engaged in the business of working for peace. In this regard, Compassionate Listening delegates are exposed to more than a variety of narratives on the conflict, they become exposed to a variety of strategies and approaches to peacebuilding and conflict resolution. From the early Earthstewards days, Leah Green has plugged into a network of groups and individuals that represent the diverse heart, body and soul of the Israeli-Palestinian peace and reconciliation movement.

Further impacting how the itineraries are composed are constraints which have to do with social and political differences that exist. This point is illustrated through exploring the imbalance that exists on the itinerary between meetings with Israelis officials (of which there have been few) and Palestinian officials (of which there have been many). Although the project has met regularly with Knesset members, our November 1999 meeting with a party functionary was a first. And this was not for lack of trying. According to Andrea's briefing on the bus ride to the

meeting, Leah had been “very, very persistent.” Initially, even after the appointment was made he had tried to cancel. Andrea told the story:

What he told us originally was that he was very busy because of redeployment. And he was trying to shake us out of this slot for a couple of days now. I told him what we had seen and heard and that we thought it was very, very important for us to be with him because otherwise we weren't going to get the Israeli official position. I told him that we were with Palestinian families, living ten and twenty in a room and that we thought it was very important to hear the opposite point of view. And, so he did hold the appointment for us.

Andrea went on to try to make sense of why one government is so much more accessible than the other. Here is how she explained the situation:

We saw the Secretary of Cabinet in Gaza. Who is that the equivalent of in the US? Is that like George Schultz ? In the Israeli community we have not been able to get that high and we were extremely persistent...For whatever reason, it is just harder to get in there. The Palestinian Authority may be a little bit more relaxed, maybe a little over-staffed in some way for the kinds of contact and influx of visitors that they have. I'm not sure how to judge it.

In a later conversation with Stanley Ringler, the party functuary which whom we met, he asserted that it was his job to meet with English speaking groups, particularly Americans, and show them a view of what is happening, their policies and visions and challenges. He affirmed that it is difficult to get to meet with Israeli leadership because everyone is so pressed for time, working under unbelievable pressures. The Palestinians, on the other hand, have a different situation. He offered his take on this matter:

The Palestinians are fighting a major public relations battle and that's where they are much more desperately in need of the publicity and the exposure. So I think that's probably the reason that they are accessible. Nobody has any real responsibility there. I don't mean to be facetious, but the facts of the matter are that the power resides in one of the offices of the PA, and other people who have titles are not as busy as they might otherwise be if there was really a

greater sharing of power. So that's a fact, and I'm not trying to editorialize. So maybe that's one of the reasons they have more time and access.

It goes beyond the scope of this research to investigate this assertion. However, from my observations and interviews, I can confirm that Palestinian officials are accessible and that they claim to value the opportunity to meet with foreigners. With these differences in mind, how is it that these individuals use this opportunity? What do they choose to communicate on these occasions? Some bases for answering these questions is provided in the section examining the encounters with first track officials.

Two other notable features characterize the itineraries of the project. One has to do with how the project reaches into the most marginalized communities involved with the conflict. The project makes a notable effort to meet and build relationship with groups who are ideologically positioned outside of most peace and justice discourses. The second notable feature has to do with how the project meets with multiple layers of each society: from government officials to ordinary citizens. In this respect, the itineraries have cultivated vertically and horizontally pathways through each society. What follows is a closer look at the social and political terrain of these pathways and how they have developed.

The Israeli Peace Movement

When Leah Green organized the first Earthsteward's mission to Israel and the Palestinian territories, the year was 1990. The Palestinian Intifada had broken out in December of 1987 and it was still raging. In response to this full-scale civilian uprising, Israel saw the emergence of a strong protest movement (Kaminker 1996,

Bar-On, 1996). Importantly, Green was able to organize an itinerary by plugging into an emerging network of Palestinians and Israelis cooperating and acting in solidarity to end Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories. In his analysis of the Israeli peace movement during the first Palestinian Intifada, Reuven Kaminer (1996) describes how this movement was poised and ready to take advantage of the Intifada as a starting point for a new approach to the conflict and to Israeli-Palestinian relations (xi). Out of this, the Israeli peace movement generated an unprecedented diversity of new, autonomous protest formations. The Compassionate Listening Project has built relationships with every sector of this diverse movement. Some background offers a basis for differentiating the various groups and individuals with which the project meets.

The history of the Israeli peace movement is deeply intertwined with the ideology, myths and symbols of Zionism that are the foundations of Israel as a Jewish state. More specifically, varying interpretations of Zionism provide the origins of a deep divide among Israeli Jews. An understanding of the emergence and character of Israel's peace movement is thus offered through a look at the nature of this divide. Analyzing Israel's peace movement in this way, David Hall-Cathala (1990) begins by pointing to a dilemma or tension existing for most modern societies. On the one hand are loyalties to *universal* values—values such as liberty, equality and justice—shared in common with other societies. On the other hand, are the more *particular* values, those values that are unique to a culture and people (2). In the case of Israel, this tension is particularly noteworthy.

Two ideological trends informed the struggle to define Israeli national identity. An embrace of universal values—stressing freedom, democracy and justice—stemmed from the Enlightenment and the French Revolution. Competing with that, particular values would manifest in devotion to *Eretz Ysrael* and the defining of a Jewish national identity based on Jewish religion, philosophy and history. Ninetieth century Zionism—strongly influenced by both European nationalism and socialism—was relatively successful in combining particular and universal values. This balance carried over to the pre and early state period, led by Ben-Gurion and the socialist bloc (Hall-Cathala 1990, 3). Importantly however, the delicate equilibrium between particular and universal values was irrevocably upset in 1967. The Six-Day War would set major particular trends in motion, largely defining the national character of Israel in the years to come (4).

Israel's most popular peace movement organization, Peace Now, emerged largely in defense of the universal value of peace and fighting against the particular values which were fueling Zionist territorial expansion. At the same time, a basic loyalty to Zionism and the State of Israel was crucial to mobilizing its broad base of support (Bar-On 1998, 31). In this regard, the Israeli peace movement has, for the most part, been involved with what Hall-Cathala (1990) calls “restorative collective action.” What this means in his words is that the peace movement is involved primarily in activities that attempt “to move an increasingly fragmented society back to a time of shared beliefs and values—real or imagined” (22). From its inception, Peace Now aimed at inclusiveness, thus allowing considerable ideological variation. In this regard, the movement organization has been described as “a slow-moving

train, allowing people to get off at different ideological stops” (45). Prior to the first Intifada, the last stop on the train would be the advocating of a Palestinian state. Up until then, the majority of Peace Now supporters looked to Jordan for a solution to the ‘Palestinian question.’” In this way, Peace Now distinguished itself from the radical left that embraced Palestinian self-determination and was willing to reject Zionist ideology in order to resolve the conflict (Bar-On, 23).

The basic ideological division between radical and reformist peace movement organizations can still be observed today in Israel. Stanley Ringler, for instance, articulated the distinction when I spoke with him. Ringler was a member of Barak’s government and as the Director of the Foreign Desk he met with the Compassionate Listening Project on two occasions. His remarks highlight the tension that exists between various divisions of the left and branches of the peace movement:

I consider myself left, and I don’t want to be typed with the Quakers, people who are hostile to Israel’s interests. The Quakers have always sounded very compassionate and concerned for one side, but, never—as far as we’re concerned, and I’ve been involved, (This goes back to when I was living in the States, and for the last 30 years.)—They have a history of advocating one side and not bothering to understand, investigate the other side, our side. So are their left-wing credentials better than mine because they are critical of me? I don’t think so. I think their ideas are misplaced and their intentions are misplaced. They come from the left, but the left is very diverse.

Although all factions of the peace movement accept and work towards the establishment of a Palestinian state, divisions remain around issues such as the future boundaries for that state, the degree to which concessions over Jerusalem are considered acceptable, and since 2003, divisions now exist over Israel’s security wall. In short, the mainstream Peace Now movement organization supported the Oslo track as the road to peace between Israel and the Palestinians. The more radical movement

organizations have been sharply critical of Oslo, warning that this pathway to peace would not lead to a viable or sustainable outcome. The two sides of the movement have danced cautiously with one another over the years, working together whenever it was considered an ideological possibility, but keeping guard over their differences. Typical of mainstream Israeli attitudes, Peace Now has maintained a stance that has been consistently critical of the radical peace groups because of their basic lack of loyalty to Zionist/nationalist ideologies (The Other Israel, November 2000).

Precisely because the radical peace movement organizations have not been constrained by Zionist loyalties, two other characteristics are notable features of these groups: their early willingness to create dialogue and friendships with the PLO; and, their framing of the conflict as an anti-imperialist/colonialist struggle. With respect to the latter feature, the radical groups (such as Matzpen) shared much in common with the international peace movement. In particular, consistent with the anti-imperialist discourse of the international peace movement, the radical peace groups have been consistently critical of United States policy with regards to Israel and the Palestinians. By contrast, Peace Now has been an avid supporter of United States policy, often much to the dismay of many within the international peace movement (Kaminer 1996, 103).

This distinction between radicals and reformists is one useful way of differentiating the various speakers that meet with the project. It turns out that the majority of the supporting peace people who meet with the project fall loosely into the camp of radicals. For these individuals and groups, loyalties to mainstream, nationalist Zionist principles do not inhibit a critique of Israel's policies concerning

the occupation of Palestinian territories and the Oslo peace process. Their unabashed defense of human rights principles and their unapologetic critique of Israel are defining features for this group. What differentiates the radicals is again their relationship to Zionism. Providing examples of the range of radical viewpoints, the following section provides a brief introduction to some of the key *regulars* that meet with the group. It is significant that Leah has chosen to develop most of her relationships with the so-called radicals of Israel's peace movement, as opposed to the mainstream Peace Now organization. This choice serves, albeit indirectly, to support Israel's radical left, along with their perspectives, largely through the exposure that comes from these encounters. Given these groups' emphasis on social justice concerns, the choice is consistent with Leah's commitment to exposing the delegations to perspectives on the root sources of the conflict.

Meetings with Israel's Left

One of the earliest members of the Israeli peace movement is Lea Tsemel, a human rights lawyer who has met several times with the project. When the Six-Day war broke out in Israel, Lea was among the few Israelis who spoke out in support of universal values. Speaking to the group in 1999, Leah Tsemel described herself as follows:

I am an Israel Jew. I was born in Haifa about 55 years ago and what used to be my uniqueness, let's say, is that I was just a normal Israeli girl from a Zionist family, you know, the average Israeli. And, I became an anti-Zionist and a very active anti-Zionist during my studies.

Lea Tsemel was a student during the 1967 war. Like many, she had volunteered for the war. During her service, she witnessed lines of Palestinian refugees, with their belongings on their heads making their way towards Jericho. She described the experience and its impact:

[This] was exactly the picture that my grandmother had of the wandering Jew, a group of Jews. I still remember this picture. It was cold weather—here it was warm weather—walking in the snow with their belongings. You know, it was the same picture. So it hit me, what are we doing? That was I think the major shock.

As a result, Lea Tsemel has spent her entire legal career defending the rights of Palestinians.

Lea Tsemel spent about an hour with the November 1999 delegation of the Compassionate Listening Project. Gathered in the regular meeting space at the National Palace Hotel, she described with precise, matter of fact detail the mundane and legal use of torture against Palestinians by Israel's military, as well as the systematic discrimination Palestinians experience in the different Israeli courts. Acknowledging her weary cynicism, she opens her talk with an apology for the lack of optimism that she brings to this "energetic, willing and hopeful group." Despite that there are now more Israelis concerned for the rights of Palestinians—canceling her uniqueness as an anti-Zionist radical—what she explained to the group offers a vivid illustration of how, after battling the state of Israel for over 30 years, she has only seen minor improvements. Working to transform Israel's legal system into one that is accountable to basic principles of justice and human rights, Lea Tsemel is arguably a reformist in that sense. Yet her radical rejection of Zionism positions Lea

as a maverick outsider, a radical activist who just happens to be agitating from a location on the inside of Israel's state structures.

Working to agitate from the more traditional outsider location, Jeff Halper is another regular who has met with the project repeatedly in recent years. Jeff Halper describes himself as a Marxist that rejects Zionism. Originally from Minnesota, he has lived in Israel since 1973 and has been active in the Israeli peace movement for most of those years. Halper's career as an activist dates back to the civil rights era and his perspective remains deeply informed from that time. As such, he works tirelessly to address the structural issues of inequality and injustice that he sees as the foundations of the conflict. More specifically, his peace movement activities are based on non-violent direct action and civil disobedience to the Israeli occupation authorities. Halper was one of the founders of the Israel Committee Against Home Demolitions (ICAHD) and has been the Coordinator of the organization since 1997. Also an anthropologist, he pays particular attention to the quality of relationships he forges with Palestinians, working in close cooperation with Palestinian organizations. At the time Jeff spoke with me in 1999, he was also working for a Palestinian-Israeli organization called the Alternative Information Center (AIC). Having then just published their first newsletter, today their internet site serves as a kind of information hub for radical perspectives based on universal values of social justice, solidarity and community involvement.

Jeff used large, detailed maps to present the problem of Palestinian home demolitions to the Compassionate Listening Project. Listeners learned that the problem revolves around the issue of building permits. Palestinian population growth

has resulted in a need for more housing. Construction requires a permit to be issued by Israeli authorities. Permits are next to impossible to obtain. Many Palestinians therefore have gone ahead and built on the land they own without permits. Built illegally, Israel condemns these homes for demolition. In 1997, when Jeff Halper and others became involved in the issue of home demolitions, the Israeli Municipality of Jerusalem and the Ministry of Interior were destroying between twenty to thirty houses a week. Speaking to the November 1999 Compassionate Listening delegation at the National Palace Hotel, listeners heard that more than two thousand Palestinian homes have been demolished since 1987. In 1998, 163 homes were demolished and a similar rate of demolitions had continued in 1999. Further, two thousand demolition orders remained outstanding for the West Bank, and another two thousand for East Jerusalem. The thesis of his talk is echoed concisely on the ICAHD fact sheet that he passed out to the group:

The motivation for demolishing these Palestinian homes is purely political, although elaborate system of planning regulations, laws and procedures are employed to give it a legal justification. The goal is to confine the 2,000,000 residents of the West Bank and East Jerusalem to small, crowded, impoverished and disconnected “bantustan,” thus effectively foreclosing any viable Palestinian entity and ensuring Israeli control even if the Palestinians achieve some form of internal “autonomy.”

Following his talk, on more than one occasion Halper has taken the group to visit Palestinian families with whom ICAHD had been working to assist. In November of 1999, he took us to the home of Salim Shawarmreh who had just had his home rebuilt through ICAHD assistance following Israeli demolition. Sitting in Salim’s living-room on the outskirts of East Jerusalem, he shares with the room full of Compassionate Listeners the detailed efforts he made to obtain a permit to build,

along with the traumatic trials that his family have been through as a result of the demolition. On the bus headed back to the hotel following this visit, Jeff passes a hat to collect donations for Salim's family and others in their circumstances. He furthermore instructs the delegation about other ways they can help and be involved. Jeff Halper's rejection of Zionism in combination with working in solidarity with Palestinians, positions him as a quintessential radical activist. As the following example demonstrates, not everyone who shares Jeff Halper's critical stance on land use issues, also shares his anti-Zionist identity.

Another regular from whom delegates learned further about land use issues was Sara Kaminker. Prior to her death from cancer in January of 2003, Sara Kaminker was one of the few individuals Leah tried to schedule for every trip. She was a former Jerusalem city planner and City Council member who started alternative information tours of Jerusalem as a way to inform the public—which in this case includes Israelis and interested foreigners—about issues related to land use policies. In addition to being another extremely informative and engaging speaker, Sara offered an embodied example of the complexities and contradictions among peace movement activists. On several occasions delegates traveled across town by bus to meet with her in the elegant, Anglo-urban sophistication of her home in French Hill, a quiet, tree-lined suburban neighborhood on the outskirts of East Jerusalem that was built on land expropriated from Palestinians during the Six Day War. Again with the use of large, detailed maps Sara explained to the delegates how she saw land use issues as the root of the conflict. Yet, unlike Jeff Halper, Sara described herself as a devoted Zionist. She was elected to the city council in 1992 as a member of the left-

wing Meretz Party, but lost her seat after one term, presumably the price she paid for speaking out in support of Palestinian rights in Jerusalem (Amir, Hutman and Melamed 1999, 31). Speaking with me in her home in June of 2000, she described what it meant to her to move to French Hill in 1975 from Brooklyn, New York.

I moved here when I knew nothing about all of the problems that I speak to you about. Then, I was a devoted worker for a then-mayor, Teddy Kollek, and I, like all the other people in Jerusalem, knew only one thing—how marvelous and glorious it was that the city had been reunited and we were going to be the most benign conquerors in the world. And we were going to make everybody happy.

Over twenty years later, she was straightforward and clear about how she sees that she will be personally impacted by a peace agreement in Jerusalem.

I will have to move when there is a peace arrangement in Jerusalem, tomorrow. About that, there is no question. Or, I would have to decide that I will stay under Palestinian control here. Whatever is needed for me and all my neighbors to do in order for us to have peace in this city and in this country, some of us are ready to do it. I won't say that everybody is, but certainly I am, and quite a number of my neighbors. If they tell us we have to move in order to have peace in Jerusalem, we will move.

Like Lea Tsemel, Sara Kaminker was working with and within Israel's legal and political institutions to steer these structures away from the particular values of Eretz Israel and towards the more universally shared values of human rights and coexistence. Both can be considered reformists in this sense at the same time that they pursued political agendas that are far to the left of Peace Now. Yet, whereas Lea Tsemel rejects Zionism, Sara Kaminker embraces it.

Yet another regular on the Compassionate Listening itinerary is one of Israel's most prominent feminist peace activists. Gila Svirsky is another former American and radical activist who describes herself as a devoted Zionist. She is a founding member

of the Coalition of Women for a Just Peace, a grouping of eight Israeli and Palestinian women's peace organizations. She was also an activist with Women in Black, a woman's activist group who conducted Friday afternoon vigils for peace for three years beginning in 1988. Repeatedly, Gila has introduced Compassionate Listening delegations to the important role that women have played in the reconciliation and peacebuilding process, building coalitions across enemy lines based on their common identity and concerns as women.

As this sampling of biographies demonstrates, a notable feature of Israel's peace movement is that it is made up predominately Ashkenazim, that is, Jews of European or German decent. This is a feature that became evident early in the movement's development. In general, the Ashkenazim represent Israel's well off and well educated. In the case of Peace Now, for instance, the movement has been notably homogenous. A majority of its activists had parents who had either been born in Israel, or had come to the country as idealist pioneers before the establishment of the state. As a result, the activists often share common histories and backgrounds which include either their days at university or experiences working in a kibbutz (Bar-On, 121).

In the case of Israel's left-wing radical activists, a large portion are American-Jewish immigrants whose values and perspectives were shaped either directly or indirectly by the civil rights era of protest movements. Judith Green is a former American who is a long-time Israeli peace activist and one of the founders of a dialogue effort with the village of Beit Sahour. She met and spoke with the Compassionate Listening Project on a couple of occasions. When I spoke with her,

she had much to say about how she saw the influence of former Americans on Israel's peace movement.

People like myself, and a lot of other people in the human rights and peace camp come from the U.S. And we live here. But we were brought up and educated in the U.S....I mean we came here and we became Israelis. We're citizens and we live here. We have our families here. It's not like we're on a mission or something. But once we're here and we're citizens, we have different ways of seeing things and different pasts, different experiences. You can't help but notice how many Anglo-Saxon, or English speaking immigrants are involved in the peace camp and women's movement and civil rights movement. I see it as a very positive thing; that it's a real contribution that people who come from a different political background and structure have made here. We're all people from the 1960s, a lot of us. And we were active to a certain extent in all those things. So we just naturally continued doing it here...., So it's had a very important effect, I think, on the development of the left, or whatever the progressive side of society is.

A second feature of Israel's peace movement that can be surmised from this sampling is that its members are predominately secular Jews. Modern political Zionism was initially largely a secular movement strongly influenced by both European nationalism and socialism. When Israel captured the West Bank during the Six Day War, however what was awakened were dormant aspirations among many Israelis for the acquisition of the entire area of historic Eretz Yisrael (Bar On, 27). The settlers' movement (Gush Emunim) was established and populated primarily by orthodox Jews. This created a strong stereotype in the public mind, which identified orthodoxy, and especially the Zionist wing of orthodoxy, with right-wing politics. This proposed a dilemma for orthodox Jews who considered themselves part of the peace movement but otherwise identified with Israel's orthodox community (Bar On, 169). Many progressive orthodox Jews began to use religious arguments—as opposed to the predominately secular messages of other peace movement activists—to express views in support of the peace movement. One such example is an ideological-political

forum called Oz ve Shalom (Strength and Peace), which was founded in 1975. The aim of this branch of Israel's peace movement was to promote an alternative vision of religious Zionism (Bar-On, 170)

One of the past directors and founders of Oz ve Shalom is another close friend of the Compassionate Listening Project. Yehezkel Landau is a religiously motivated, American born peace activist. He is also the co-founder and international relations director of the Open House center for Jewish-Arab coexistence in the Israeli city of Ramle. Until his recent appointment as associate professor of interfaith relations at the Hartford Seminary in Connecticut, he had been a resident of Jerusalem since 1978. In addition to having met regularly with delegations, Yehezkel Landau also serves as an Advisory Board member for the Compassionate Listening Project. Speaking with November 1999 delegation, Landau situated both Oz ve Shalom and the Open House by providing a history of both organizations. As such, his talk brought into focus some of the key contentious differences within Israeli society. Open House has a unique and personal history.

Yehezkel's wife, Dalia Landau grew up in the house. In 1967, when Dalia was 19 years old, a Palestinian family showed up at the door. This family was the original owners of the house until 1948 when they were expelled by Israeli military at gunpoint. Over the course of several encounters a relationship was forged between Dalia's family and home's original Palestinian owners. In 1985, Dalia inherited the house and, after a series of discussions with the original family, it was decided that the house would become dedicated as a common home to Jewish and Arab children

and their families in the mixed city. Since then, Yehezkel went on to inform the delegates, the house had become the site of many co-existence projects.

By 1992, hundreds of organizations in Israel existed with the purpose of promoting Arab-Jewish coexistence work (Rothman 1998, 220). Talks between Israeli and Palestinian leadership, leading to the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993, opened the channels for contact between more Israelis and Palestinians on other levels of society. The roots of many of these efforts can be traced to when Rabbi Meir Kahane was elected to the Knesset in 1984 on a blatant racist platform, evoking serious alarm within large sectors of Israeli society. In response, Peace Now, along with other peace organizations, became involved in creating anti-racist groups (Hall-Cathala 1990, 65). Although many of the efforts fizzled in the short term, what stuck was the notion that breaking down barriers of mistrust, misunderstanding, and stereotyping was key to resolving the conflict. Although, the focus of these organizations has primarily been relations between Arabs and Jewish citizens in Israel, the philosophy of coexistence has been extended to Palestinians living in the occupied territories.

Compassionate Listening delegates have met and listened to individuals engaged in coexistence work both in Israel and in the territories. On other occasions delegates have actually visited the Open House and met with Dalia Landau, in addition to meetings with other coexistence organizations. As another example, delegates learned about the small group of Israelis that had repeatedly traveled from Jerusalem to the outskirts of Bethlehem, to the Palestinian village of Beit Sahour, in

order to engage in dialogue with Palestinians as part of an effort to build bridges of trust and mutual understanding.

The speakers introduced are but a small sampling of the individuals and groups working for peace within Israeli society. Further, these speakers do not exhaust the list of peace movement actors who have met or continue to meet with the Compassionate Listening project. What this background and sampling of speakers are meant to provide is a sense of the kinds of distinctions that differentiate this portion of the territory that Compassionate Listening delegates traverse. What this sampling and history further provides is a look at a spectrum of peacebuilding actors and strategies. I return at the end of this chapter to look at how the philosophies and approaches of some of these actors interface with that of the Compassionate Listening project. What follows here is a further look at the terrain that has become familiar ground to the project.

Voices from Israel's Right

In contrast to those that make up Israel's political left, the Compassionate Listening Project also meets with groups and Individuals on Israel's right that embrace contending views to those within the peace movement. Right-wing, nationalist Zionism holds as an ideological article of faith that all historical Palestine belongs to the Jewish people. Holding this as a non-negotiable, ideological article of faith, right-wing Zionists reject demands for national equality between Israelis and Palestinians. Based on this, right-wing Zionists have advocated for solutions ranging from expulsion of Palestinian Arabs to more moderate positions which recognize the

civil, though not national rights of “indigenous” Arabs. Offering a key example of voices representing this perspective, is the Yeshiva (religious school) of Beit Orot on the Mount of Olives.

On both occasions that I traveled with the Compassionate Listening Project, we visited Beit Orot. The delegations were invited to sit in one of the classrooms that opened onto sunny groves of olive trees on a terraced hillside. From here, we learned about the philosophical worldview and mission of the school from the school’s public relations representatives and the director, Chaim Silverstein. Delegates learned that the school follows the Kabbalistic teachings of Rabbi Abraham Issac Kook. It was explained that the central theme of his teaching is the idea of light being the connection between the physical and holiness in the world. This light comes into the world and illuminates it. He sees this as the general concept of the Jewish task in the world. Beit Orot means: the house of light. He accepts that their way of seeing the illumination of the world and the Jewish people is not always acceptable to everyone else. But, they must do what they believe is morally and historically correct. In the early 1970s Beit Orot entered into a special arrangement with Ben Gurion’s government to begin educating young people who feel very strongly about serving in the army and serving their nation on the one hand, and on the other hand about learning Torah and fulfilling themselves spiritually. According to the philosophical worldview of Beit Orot, the function of the school is one which is forged of necessity. Here is how Silverstein explained the role of the school to the November 1999 delegation.

It is not the ideal of ours to carry a sword, by no means. We are not militant. I do not enjoy the fact that we have to go to the army, but given the

circumstances that Israel, unfortunately, in the last 100 years has been defending itself against many enemies, and the reality to that is that there is an army and the army is really what is ensuring the survival of the Jewish state. We have to go to the army. Therefore, if we feel that it is important to go to the army, we believe that we should prepare our students to go into the army and to be examples and to be good soldiers.

Beit Orot trains elite military units. Their guys, as they referred to them, are both morally and personally motivated to succeed. The values they teach include the goal of promoting love and brotherhood between people. They also claim to teach social values like education, like being a good neighbor, like bringing Jews closer to their Judaism. Integrating these values, Silverstein further elaborates on the operating assumptions and beliefs that provide the basis of what they do:

We believe it says in the Bible that God gave the land of Israel to the Jewish people. In fact in this week's Torah portion it speaks of Jacob and Esau, and the dream of a ladder. In this portion, God says: "Know that I have given this land to you and to your descendants. You will be a blessing to all people." We believe that if we behave properly, we will be a blessing and will help redeem the world. We express love between all human beings. The task is to be a moral people, a moral nation, and by doing so influence mankind. Returning to and settling the Land of Israel is important. We can induce the rocks with holiness. We believe all of the land west of the Jordan was given to the Jews. All the ancient capitals of the Jews were located in the West Bank. Jerusalem is where the heavenly and earthly Jerusalem meet. We are helping to build up one Jerusalem. We believe we must rebuild the Temple according to the values of the Torah. Jeremiah asks how do you know redemption has arrived? The answer was when the land produces plentiful fruit. The land was desolate for 2,000 years. Now it produces fruit. The desert is now green. We are making Jerusalem a united city. We do not do so as a militant conqueror. Rather, a Jewish presence means we bring a healthy value to Jerusalem, and will be more easily able to inculcate values of Judaism here.

Following the director's talk, a public relations spokesperson for the school took the delegations on a kind of mini-tour of the Mount of Olives. Delegates are shown how this sacred place is surrounded by encroaching Palestinian neighborhoods and told

about the hostility brewing within them. As these neighborhoods are being pointed to, delegates are standing together on a hillside where construction is taking place for new Israeli settlements. Within the vista stretching below is the village of Issaawiya, that delegates visited with Sara Kaminker to meet town council members and the town of Anata, which is where the Shawarmareh home—visited by delegates with Jeff Halper—is located. In this regard, delegates are directly exposed to opposing perspectives on the land use policies and settlements.

In 1968, following Israel's seizure of the West Bank, a group of extreme right-wing orthodox activists squatted in a hotel in the midst of Hebron, the West Bank city known to its Palestinian inhabitants as al-Khalil. These staunch advocates for Greater Israel, pressured the Israeli government until, in 1995, the settlement of Kiryat Arba was eventually established (Bar On, 51). Among those original settlers was Sarah Nachshon. Compassionate Listening delegates met in Sara's home for the first time in May 2000, together with two other orthodox women from Kiryat Arba. In November 1999, the group met with some of the same women in one of their homes in the Hebron downtown settlement of Beit Hadasa on Shahida Street. Gathered in living rooms, delegates heard about the devotion that these women have to their faith and how passionately they feel that this land was a gift to the Jewish people given by God. The May 2000 meeting in Sarah Nachshon's home ended on a painful note when Sarah broke down in tears of anger and grief over the loss of Jewish life during this conflict. Similar to the meetings in East Jerusalem, the pain heard during these meetings is mirrored in meetings with Palestinian residents in Hebron. In this way,

again, delegates move back and forth between sides in the conflict gaining a clear sense of how all parties suffer as a result of the conflict.

When Yehezkel Landau helped to found Oz ve Shalom it was in reaction to a political organization called Gush Emunin, a religious movement that has come to express a kind of messianic nationalism materialized through aggressive settlement expansion within Palestinian territories. Gush Emunin was founded to assert their identity as a religious movement working to materialize the Zionist dream of a Greater Israel whose borders include the entire land west of the Jordan (Bar-On, 79). One of the founders of that movement is Rabbi Menachem Froman. He lives in the settlement of Tekoa in the West Bank. The Compassionate Listening Project has been to visit Rabbi Froman on a number of occasions. During the January 1998 trip, this all-Jewish delegation stayed overnight and celebrated Shabbot with families in Tekoa. Based on this experience, Rabbi Philip Bently—a delegate on this trip who has been a vocal critic of the settlement movement—is quoted in the project’s first documentary for reflecting on how surprised he was to discover such a vibrant, wonderful Jewish community among the Tekoa residents. Adding to the contradiction this kind of experience represented for those opposed to settlements is the message that delegates hear from Rabbi Menachem Froman. He adds complexity to the mosaic of narrative and discourse that listeners are exposed to.

Rabbi Menachem Froman is both an advocate for the settlement movement at the same time that he is at the forefront of interfaith dialogue and coexistence. He has conducted dialogue with Hamas sheiks and other Islamic clerics, seeking partnerships for peace between messianic Judaism and fundamentalist Islam. Part of his vision for

peace includes Jerusalem being relinquished from the jurisdiction of state politics and turned over to a consortium of religious leaders, thereby naming it a World Capital of Peace. The November 1999 delegation met with Rabbi Fromen in his home in Tekoa. After listening to Rabbi Froman, one delegate concluded that he is so far to the right that he comes out on the left. According to his views, it is the secularism of nation-state politics that is at the root of the conflict. For this reason, Froman advocates for a one-state solution to the conflict.

These speakers represent a sampling of those from Israel's right with whom the Compassionate Listening project has met with on a regular basis. While again, not exhaustive of the list of those who have visited with the project, these examples offer a sense of who these speakers are and the perspectives that they share with the group. As with the radical peace movement, among members of Israel's far right are a disproportionate number of former Americans. Kaminer (1996) points out that many commentators have reasoned how it makes sense that ideologically motivated immigrants would end up strongly committed to their principles (152). Further, this sampling serves to suggest the presence of diversity among those on Israel's right. As can be claimed with the project as a whole, the exposure to both the content and context of these meetings with Israel's right, serves to challenge simple stereotypes and add depth and detail to the terrain—literally and metaphorically—of the conflict.

Listening Among Palestinians

Among the many activities that occurred during the first day of the November 1999 trip, delegates were given an opportunity to practice Compassionate Listening

with Zoughbi-al-Zoughbi. Zoughbi is the director of WI'AM Palestinian Center for Conflict Resolution, which happens to be the first Palestinian institution of its kind. He is also a member of the Compassionate Listening Advisory Board. He and Leah have known each other since 1990 when Zoughbi was working for the Mideast Council of Churches. A Palestinian Christian born and raised in Bethlehem, Zoughbi received his training in mediation and conflict resolution from Notre Dame University after which he came home and established WI'AM. This first day of the trip is usually dedicated to training in Compassionate Listening. Towards that end, Zoughbi told a story from his life as a way to offer the jet-lagged delegates a chance to feel out what it is like to try engaging people from a place of compassionate listening. He opens his story with this caveat:

I am not challenging Israeli's existence. Although this existence was built on the catastrophe of my people and me. And I will challenge the Israeli occupation. I challenge the Israeli expansionism in terms of settlement, the occupation of land, in terms of confiscating the land and our identity.

He goes on to tell about being invited to present at a conference on reconciliation and conflict resolution in South Africa, and how, after much excitement and preparation, in the end, Zoughbi never made it to his conference. He made it as far as the airport, where, after a series of humiliating, frustrating and exhausting interrogations at road checkpoints and with airport security he missed his plane.

Similar to most of the Palestinians who meet with the project, Zoughbi's personal account took his listeners into the mundane lived reality of the occupation. He brought to life the unjust and unkind treatment that Palestinians experience on a daily basis as a result of Israeli security measures and occupation. But, his story did more than that. He presented himself as an emissary of peace, one of the good guys.

From his testimony, one could easily surmise that there is nothing about Zoughbi's person or his involvements that presents a threat to Israeli security. What his story suggested is that a key problem with Israeli security measures is that they do not discriminate between 'good people' and 'bad people.' The very nature of these policies are such that they set up a kind of collective punishment, a form of structural and literal violence that in itself contributes to the cycle of violence at the root of the conflict. Over the course of the next two weeks, the listeners heard several other personal accounts that exposed the daily forms of humiliation and frustrations—the structural and literal violence—experienced by Palestinians.

At the same time that his message was politically charged, Zoughbi is one of many Palestinians who are advocating for non-violent, constructive strategies of resolution to the conflict. More specifically, his commitment is to the promotion of conflict resolution skills and approaches—both indigenous and western—into Palestinian society. Other Palestinians who meet regularly with the project are at the forefront of efforts seeking to transform Palestinian society and/or the conflict with Israel. The variety of strategies and approaches that they use suggest much about the historical, social and political context within which they are embedded.

Commentators often ask where the Palestinian peace movement is? Where is the non-violent resistance movement? Embodied within the Compassionate Listening project's itinerary are significant responses to this question. Similar to Zoughbi, many of the Palestinian speakers that have met and continue to meet with the Compassionate Listening project are the living examples of advocates for peaceful coexistence, on the one hand, and advocates for human rights on the other. While

they all point to Israeli's military occupation of Palestinian territories as a root cause of the conflict, their testimonies further reveal how those who advocate for human rights and coexistence within Palestinian society are further marginalized and repressed by the Palestinian Authority. Considered all together, this collection of speakers can be interpreted to suggest that the seeds of a peace movement do exist, but the obstacles they face are substantial.

Offering another example of an effort working to transform Palestinian society and the way Palestinians relate to Israelis and to the conflict is the Hope Flowers School. Located in the village of El Khader, in the south Bethlehem area of the West Bank, Hope Flowers School is dedicated to education for coexistence, peace, non-violence and democracy. Founded as Al Amal ("The Hope") childcare center with 22 children in 1984, the school gradually grew until in 1995 it became the Hope Flowers School, running classes K-6. The school reached a highpoint enrollment of 500 students in 1998. At that time there were Jewish volunteers teaching classes in Hebrew, discussion groups for parents and field trips to nature preserves in the Dead Sea and around Jericho.

The founder of the school was Hussein Issa, a refugee from Deheishe refugee camp south of Bethlehem. Upon founding the school, he devoted the rest of his life to promoting its growth and protecting its survival, despite ongoing financial difficulties and repeated arrests by Palestinian authorities on the one hand, and threats of demolition by the Israeli authorities on the other. Hope Flowers School curriculum embodies western concepts of peace education, democracy and coexistence. In a religious Muslim society that associates western democratic ideals with imperialism,

Issa's enterprise has been treated with grave suspicion by many within his community and by the Palestinian authorities. Prior to the second Intifada, an Israeli flag was displayed on an outside mural beside the other flags of the world. (According to a 2002 New York Times article, the flag had been blotted out by some who took offense to it and, due to the Israeli closures, the family has been unable to have it replaced.) Advocating for coexistence with Israel would aggravate many elements within Palestinian society who saw this as a tacit acceptance of the status quo. This popular rejection of a normalization of relations with Israel, would subject Hussein Issa to a lifetime of hostility from many around him. In March of 2000, Hussein Issa died from heart disease at the age of 52. Since that time, his family has struggled to keep the school going. With the outbreak of the second Intifada, the obstacles for doing so have only mounted. Through an outpouring of support from international friends, the school continues to survive, although as of 2002, enrollment was down to around 120 students (Bennet 2002, 2).

Among the school's many American and European friends is the Compassionate Listening Project. Speaking with me only months before his death, Hussein Issa spoke in warm and familiar terms about Leah, calling her his good friend and recalling with clarity the first time that they met in 1990. It was during the first Intifada and Leah lead an Earthstewards delegation to help out at the school for several days. Since that time, the group has been back regularly. In May 2000, I held a candle and walked in silence with the other delegates through a recently completed addition to the school. In this way we blessed the new addition in memory of Hussein.

Another respected and valued regular with whom the Compassionate Listening project meets is Dr. Eyad Sarraj. Dr. Sarraj is a Palestinian psychiatrist from Gaza committed to fostering emotional and psychological well being within Palestinian society. In 1990, when Dr. Eyad Sarraj first established the Community Center for Mental Health in Gaza he was the only psychiatrist in the entire Gaza Strip. Within its first ten years the Center had seen 14, 000 patients. Through this experience, he became convinced that the mental health of a society is directly related to human rights conditions. This is how he explained his thinking to the November 1999 delegation.

In the course of working with the patients, we could not help but see that there is a very intimate relationship between mental health and human rights. It was impossible for us to define mental health, a state of wellbeing, in a state of oppression, in an environment that is very oppressive and very abusive in so many ways to the individual sense of dignity.

In addition to his work as a psychiatrist, he is also a vocal advocate for human rights. In 1993 Sarraj became one of the founders of the Palestinian Independent Commission for Citizen Rights. He explained to our group how his commitment to human rights made him a target of Israeli and Palestinian authorities.

In the course of my work as a commissioner for citizen rights, I made it clear that for me, human rights are above nationalism and religion and all these boundaries. For me, human rights are human rights whether it is by the Israeli Occupation or by the Palestinian Authority. Violation of human rights should be exposed. The best way to correct things is to say the truth and expose this.

As a result of this stance, Sarraj has been arrested and detained a number of times by the Palestinian Authorities.

Sarraj seemed furthermore committed to offering insight into the Palestinian mindset in particular and more generally, into how cycles of violence become self-

perpetuating. He continually mines his own experience and observations for examples.

One day during my last detention I overheard a Palestinian officer interrogating a Palestinian man. He was calmly asking questions, but there were no answers. Gradually, the interrogator raised his voice and began shouting. Suddenly, he was screaming; but in Hebrew. I was stunned. That was a graphic illustration of the powerful psychological process of identification with the aggressor. In simple terms, the Palestinian officer who was once a helpless victim in Israeli prison was now assuming the position of power, which in his deepest mind was symbolized by the Israeli officer.

Ultimately, his message is one that advocated for conditions where human rights and human dignity are valued and upheld. This he sees as the foundation for any viable peace. For Palestinians, the aspirations for dignity and rights are bound in longings for a Palestinian state. He therefore told our group in no uncertain terms what he foresaw in the event that Palestinian aspirations should end in disappointment.

I tell you, I am giving you a warning. I can see it. Palestinians today are sitting and waiting. Everybody is telling them peace is coming. Oh yes, this is only temporary, Oslo Agreements are only an interim agreement. We will have the final status solution within a year. Don't worry. You will have a democratic state. You will have the West Bank and Gaza. You will have Jerusalem. You will have everything. This is the promise. And people are sitting and waiting. Sitting and waiting. If nothing of this happens, people will explode. I can tell you with frankness, it is going to be bloody. Inside and outside, it is going to spill everywhere.

He ended his talk with us by emphasizing how Palestinians yearn for peace, a peace that will allow them to live with dignity. This emphasis underscored his message about how it is the conditions that are generating prospects for further violence, not an innate hostility against the Jews or against Israel.

Other Palestinian speakers built on the themes of repression from both Israeli and Palestinian authorities, and of the injustices and humiliating daily struggles as a

result of the occupation. For instance, in Hebron, listeners learn about that city's unique situation from another long time friend of the project, Hisham Sharabati. Like Zoughbi, Hisham has known Leah since 1990 and is also one of the project's coordinators. As such, he is the person responsible for organizing home stays with Palestinian families and other West Bank visits. Hisham works with the Palestinian Society for the Protection of Human Rights and he also works as a journalist. In addition to speaking to the group in the usual fashion where everyone is gathered around listening, Hisham typically leads the delegates on a walking tour through the streets of Hebron. Along the way, Hisham provides the basic shape of the conflict in Hebron as experienced by Palestinians. During the November 1999 trip, delegates learned about the establishment of ideological Orthodox settlement in 1968, for instance, as they walk by the ramshackle buildings on what the Jews call King David Street and what the Arabs call al-Shahida (Martyrdom) Street. Hisham repeatedly referred to the Berlin wall as a metaphor to describe this volatile, divided city. As they walk along, clumped around Hisham so they can hear him speaking, delegates were witness to a brigade of Israeli and Palestinian soldiers, coils of razor wire and dozens and dozens of concrete barriers. Settlers roam their designated parts of the city with rifles and machine guns strapped in plain view. In a city of 120,000 Palestinians, 450 Jewish settlers enjoy protection from 1,500 Israeli soldiers. Hisham laid out what this asymmetry means for Palestinians living in the city.

For any Palestinian, walking here is like a tension place. You see all the military army, the Israeli army, and you see lots of settlers who are armed. Here, if anything happens, you are always the blamed side. You are the suspected person. You are the accused person. You are the source of the problems here.

Among the examples provided to emphasize this point, Leah piped in to tell about what happened when in 1994 Barch Goldstein entered the Cave of the Patriarchs, a site holy both to Muslims and Jews, and massacred 29 Muslims during their Friday prayers. Following the massacre, al-Shahida street became closed to Palestinian traffic. The street was closed even to the 20,000 Palestinian homeowners and shopkeepers in the vicinity. Eventually, concrete barriers divided the street. Hisham picked up the story:

That was here. It was right here, at the junction. It was dividing the street. It was really like the Berlin wall. The right side for Arabs and cars, the left side for Israelis...Recently they opened this part....They declared that they opened it like 10 days ago. Then we found out that they only opened it for taxis.

Through repeated examples, the theme of injustice and humiliation gets cast into the bizarre, absurd circumstance of Hebron, where Israeli military are witnessed in the role of protector to militant, zealous extremists.

Working more within the conventions of international peace activism is Dr. Sumaya Nasser. In November of 1999, Sumaya came to the National Palace Hotel together with Gila Svirsky to speak with Compassionate Listening delegates. In this way they arrived as representatives of the trans-ethnic, trans-border alliance that women peace activists have been forging since the late 1980s. Dr. Nasser was one of the co-founders of the Jerusalem Center for Peace. The Jerusalem Center was established in 1994, with the Israeli women's center Bat Shalom. In 1997 she left a professor position at the University of Birzeit as an ecologist and botanist to become the Center's director. These two organizations are part of a unique joint venture in peace-building work. The two centers are linked through a coordinating body known

as the Jerusalem Link. The model emerged during a series of meetings held in Brussels between 1989 to 1991 under the auspices of the European Union. The project envisions Palestinian women as central players in the process of nation and state building. They work towards women's empowerment in community and political activism, women's rights protection through dialogue, training and other types of community programs.

Giving context to the kind of work that they do, she describes the discriminatory and complex legal system and the special problems that it creates, especially for Palestinian women. In one example she explains how a woman in an abusive marriage might be compelled to stay in the marriage knowing that—because proof of property ownership is in the husband's name—if she seeks divorce she will likely lose her rights of residency in Jerusalem. The link between the two centers therefore provides a channel through which legal cases like this one can be passed to their Israeli counterparts who have, for their part, established a coalition for lobbying and contesting human rights cases.

When they met together, Sumaya and Gila spoke openly to our group about the delicateness of their relationship forged through years of dialogue, mutual effort and struggle. Suggesting how a sensitivity to the asymmetrical relations of occupier and occupied has become an embodied feature of their relationship, I watched as Gila deferred most of the allotted time to Sumaya, who did the majority of speaking during their joint session with the Compassionate Listening delegates.

In May of 2000, scheduling worked out so that Summaya and Gila each came separately to speak to the Compassionate Listening Project. Setting the stage for her

talk Sumaya introduced herself as a Palestinian from Bi'r Zayt, about 28 kilometers north of Jerusalem. To come and speak with our group meant she was breaking the law since she did not have a permit. In this way she places herself in the context of about 2.5 million Palestinians who are restricted from coming to Jerusalem. Her introduction went on to include a long list of honors and awards for her reconciliation and human rights work, followed by a statement on how she lives in a perpetual state of alarm and exhaustion. In this way she used herself as an example of the risk and struggle involved in establishing and sustaining the relationships upon which the Jerusalem Link was founded. She described how the military ideologies on both sides of the conflict are invested in each side seeing the other as the enemy, and how subversive it is therefore to refuse to be enemies. Further, she argues that women have a special role to play in this regard. As women, they are able to speak out in ways for which men would be severely sanctioned.

In general, Sumaya is both a peacemaker and an advocate for human rights. Her work is grounded in an understanding for the important role that civil society can play in the transformation of the conflict. She was both critical and sympathetic of Arafat and the difficulties of state building that he inherited. It is one thing, she explained, to be a national hero, and quite another to have knowledge about how to build a democratic society. In this way she positioned herself and other elements of Palestinian civil society as important allies in the project of democratic state building. For Sumaya, those who are working to build peace are the pioneers for the future. She was idealistic about the attitudes and capacities necessary to build relationships across adversarial boundaries.

There are at least two different narratives. Who am I to judge what's wrong or correct. I have to respect that both exist. Second, I know very little about the others and the others know very little about me. When we are ready to accept this, it means we are ready to listen and to learn, to rethink and reconsider. This is very important.

At the same time, her idealism was grounded in the pragmatic obstacles to peacebuilding. As she put it: "It is much easier to make peace than to make war."

As this short sampling of speakers begins to suggest, during the period just prior to the outbreak of the second Intifada, the peace movement within Palestinian society could best be described as a loosely affiliated scattering of organizations and individuals. There exists nothing that can be easily pointed to and called a "Palestinian peace movement." This does not mean that there are not substantial numbers of Palestinians that are advocates for a constructive, non-violent resolution to the conflict. In fact, one of the clearest messages that Compassionate Listening delegates seemed to get from their time spent with Palestinians is that Israel's partners for peace were there, on the ground. They work to make their voices known wherever they can. In this way they challenge the hegemony of destructive discourse that has dominated and directed the conflict.

When the first Intifada broke out in December of 1987, it took the whole world by surprise. The spontaneous demonstration that erupted into rioting spread quickly throughout Gaza and the West Bank. Within several days it was understood that a full-blown Palestinian rebellion was underway. One of the most significant implications of the Intifada is that it meant for many the full emergence of a Palestinian national movement. Importantly, the diverse expressions of this movement have emerged and evolved within the context of occupation on the one

hand, and the repressive rule of the PLO on the other. Up until the signing of the Oslo accords, the PLO had functioned as a non-state actor, without international recognition for its right to exist and with the continual challenge of remaining relevant to and representative of its populations who remained in Palestine (Gerner 1994, 85). Immediately after the outbreak of the Intifada, Sheik Ahmad Yassin established the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) as an Islamist resistance movement aiming to capture popular support away from the PLO (Hroub 2000, 36). Contrary to the exiled leadership, Hamas derived its legitimacy from a broad base of popular support within the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (Gerner, 95). From this, one key distinction relevant to differentiating the various expressions of Palestinian national movement has to do with whether one's core political loyalties are with Hamas or to some faction of the PLO. A second distinction has to do with the degree to which armed struggle is seen as a legitimate and necessary means for pursuing aspirations for a Palestinian state.

As quoted above, Gene Knudson Hoffman, the woman who is credited for first developing Compassionate Listening has this to say about what inspired her to do so:

Some time ago I recognized that terrorists were people who had grievances, who thought their grievances would never be heard, and certainly never addressed (1991, 9).

This notion has been taken into the project in both a literal and metaphorical sense. The Compassionate Listening Project has met with known terrorists. Sheik Ahmed Yassin, the spiritual leader of Hamas who was assassinated in March of 2004 by the Israeli Defense Forces, met with the first Compassionate Listening delegation in

January 1998. Additionally, the group has met more than once with Gazi Hamad, a former leader within the Islamic Jihad movement. When he met with the Compassionate Listening project in November of 1999, it was as newspaper chief for the Islamic Salvation Party.

Echoing the same themes as that of other Palestinians, Ghazi Hamad—the “reformed terrorist”—articulates the frustration and dissatisfaction that many Palestinians were feeling at the time in regards to the Peace Process.

I feel that most Palestinians and all of them [in Gaza] are disappointed in the peace process. Because after five years of the negotiation between Israel and Palestinians, we get nothing... We are suffering and we feel that Israel exploits the umbrella of peace to increase the number of settlements, to expand settlements, to dominate more territories, confiscate more territories. I think it is not easy to talk about peace in this, in this context.

For Ghazi, peace is not simply a matter between diplomats. His ear is tuned to the Palestinian street:

Peace means peace between hearts, between feelings, between friends, it's not like eh, you just sign papers between Arafat and Barak and say....If you go now in the West Bank street in the refugees camp, no one believes in such peace.

He shares a bit of his own personal history in order to emphasize the reality of this frustration.

I think it is not easy to make coexistence between two peoples if everyone hates each other. I think if I want someone to be my friend, I should like a good relationship. But when I see; let me give you an example. I am Gazi. My father, he was killed by the Israelis in 1971. And also my cousin was killed by the Israelis in front of my eyes; they took him and put him against the wall and they shot him. This is when I was seven years old. I spent five years in Israeli prison. My other cousin was expelled to the Gulf countries in the 1967 war. My mother was beaten by the Israeli soldiers. And I think it's a small story. And if you go in every Palestinian home you find many, many painful stories. It is not easy today if someone comes and says there is peace

agreements and everything will be finished, it's not easy. There are angry feelings in the hearts of Palestinians.

Although Gazi no longer embraced the strategy of armed struggle, he was able to sympathetically articulate the logic of armed resistance that is at the root of Hamas actions.

It is occupation. [Israelis] want to kill you, they want to demolish your homes, they want to take your homeland you cannot keep silent. And I think when they blamed Hamas they killed civilians by bombing of the buses in Tel Aviv, we told them that we are ready to make cease fire, to stop killing of civilians and but first of all you should; and if you go to the list of the murders of the Intifada you will find about 275 are children under eight years old. They were killed in the Intifada. Many, many women, many old men and many children they were killed by the Israeli soldiers. So I think its kind of open war between two peoples. If you want to kill children, I will kill children. But you have to stop it. I am the, the weaker part. I am the victim all the time.

Gazi's message was framed to provoke listeners to question the label of terrorist uniquely assigned to Hamas, without also considering the degree to which Israeli's policies of self-defense can also be considered a form of state terrorism. He reminds delegates that during the 1930s and 1940s, two Jewish underground organizations, the Irgun Zvai Leumi and the Stern gang, were responsible for a number of terrorist acts. Adding further complexity to the label, he talked about how Hamas has largely been a humanitarian service organization. Before the signing of the Oslo Accords, the PLO embraced armed struggle, but similar to those who continue to embrace armed struggle as a legitimate part of the Palestinian resistance movement, Hamas did not see themselves as terrorists. They saw themselves as freedom fighters.

In November of that same year, the project met with Salah Ta'amari, one of the 85 elected members of the Palestinian Legislative Council in the West Bank and a former Fatah commander in southern Lebanon. Salah was a hero commander with the

PLO during the time when the PLO was labeled by Israel to be a terrorist organization. The following is an excerpt from the talk given by Salah Ta'amari about his early days with the PLO. This was during an era when, like many other anti-imperialist, liberation movements, the organization embraced armed struggle. I like it for how it places so-called terrorism into a broader historical context.

The sixties was the decade of youth. There were youth revolutions all over the world. And Palestinians—if we did not have this great cause—we would have become hippies and smoked marijuana (without inhaling, of course), but we joined the revolution in different ways...Che Guivarra, Nasser...we were part of the international community of revolutionaries and we were highly motivated.

Giving context to armed struggle within the Palestinian resistance movement adds further complexity to the conflict. This research was conducted prior to the outbreak of the second Intifada. During this time, even among those most skeptical of the peace process, there was widespread willingness to suspend the pursuit of armed struggle and to give the political process a chance. Both Gazi Hamad and Salah Ta'amari give testimony to this.

At the same time that Compassionate Listening delegates are exposed to the overwhelming hardships that Palestinians experience on a daily basis, importantly they meet a wide cadre of individuals who embrace peaceful solutions to the conflict. The fact that this is very new terrain for most delegates adds power to these encounters.

Listening to the First Track

First track officials add yet another layer to the unfolding, multifaceted story that these delegates hear. During the November 1999 delegation the Compassionate Listening Project met with Ahmed Abdul Rahman and Faisal Husseini, both senior officials from the Palestinian Authority. They also met with Haider Abdul Shafi, the head of the Palestinian negotiating team during the Madrid talks in 1991. All three of these individuals had become regulars on Leah's itinerary. And, all three characterize moderate to liberal voices among the Palestinian political elite. Meeting with the Compassionate Listening Project for a first time was a party functionary from Barak's government, Stanley Ringler. Ringler was the director of the foreign desk for Israel's One party. Following this initial meeting, Stanley Ringler would meet with several Compassionate Listening delegations until Barak's government was replaced by Sharon in 2001.

In November of 1999, the Compassionate Listening Project met with Ahmed Abdul Rahman, the Cabinet Secretary General for the Palestinian National Authority at his headquarters in Gaza. This was the second time that he had met with the project. He sat with us around a large conference table, with staff (several of whom were young, western dressed women) and security filling the empty seats and lining the walls surrounding the table. Abdul Rahman opened our meeting in a familiar, friendly tone, acknowledging the influential role that Jewish Americans play in terms of their support of Israel:

Who will begin? Me? As I remember from what I told you last time, when you are here, Americans, friends of peace all over the world, they plant the

hope of peace here. I said at the time, also, if there are many Americans here, it means the chance for peace is growing. What has happened here in this area, is so important for you as Americans, for you as Jewish people.... We are interested in you, of course. No one can neglect this history, this contact, and this relation between the Jews and Israel.

He continued with increasing seriousness to report that the month prior he was in Washington DC with President Arafat. There he had meetings with Jewish intellectuals who impressed him with their desire for peace. What the Jewish community needs from the Palestinians, he explained, is to know that they can trust the Palestinians and that they genuinely want to make peace. Crucial to that is an acceptance of Israel's right to exist and a denouncement of terrorism. He goes on to tell about the two assassination attempts by Islamic extremists that he has faced as the price he has paid for recognizing Israel in 1988. In doing so, Abdul Rahman communicated the constraints that limit the Palestinian Authority as statesmen.

Abdul Rahman repeated how crucial he saw that it was for there to be an end to the bloodshed and for peace to come to the region. He emphasized Israel's security needs as an important component of that peace. A personal story about a terrorist attack underscored his understanding of the paramount importance of Israel's security needs, and how this is linked to Palestinian self-interest.

One of the victims of this terrorism was the son of a friend of mine...His son was fourteen years old. He was killed on a bus in Jerusalem. So, the Israelis need real security. We are ready to do what it takes to make that happen. Because, without security for the Israelis, we will have nothing, because they are stronger than us. They can destroy us. It is very easy.

Building on the limits of his role as a statesman, he further emphasized how he cannot bring home a bargain made with Israel that is unacceptable to the Palestinian people.

I cannot tell the people: “Okay, we will omit East Jerusalem and give it to the Israelis”. I cannot. There is a mosque in it. There is a church in it. How can I take it from the memory of the Palestinians and tell them no, it is not yours?

In addition to the issue of Jerusalem, Abdul Rahman also emphasized United Nations Resolution 194, which guarantees Palestinian refugees the right of return. Here too, he makes clear that he sets his priorities upon the needs and desires of the Palestinian people. In this example, his constituency included the refugees still in camps outside of occupation territories.

We have Resolution 194. This resolution was to solve the problem of the refugees. Any person who wants to return back, he has the right. Any person who does not want, he has the compensation. It is very easy.... We want to negotiate on that basis. We cannot invent other solutions. We cannot. How can I tell the Palestinians outside, that I am the leader of the Palestinian people, and I forget this Resolution. They read it daily, like the Koran.

He further talked about the settlements as another key stumbling block to a real peace agreement that will result in the establishment of a Palestinian state. The moment that Israel is able to work towards a solution based on an acknowledgement of these issues, he contended, they will have the support of the majority of the Palestinian people.

According to Leah’s introductory remarks on the bus traveling to meet him, his reputation is that of a moderate official within the Palestinian Authority. His political values and commitments stem, again as he told us, from a pivotal personal experience.

I was in prison, in some Arab regime’s prisons. From this experience, I came with a belief only democracy can help my people, my nation. Any kind of regime, dictatorship, one system political party like what happened in Syria, or Egypt, or Iraq, I am against it. I am a strong supporter for democracy. I am working daily for human rights for the people, because I was in prison and

under heavy pressure. So, I understand what it means if any person has no human rights if he is in prison under cruel authority.

During our meeting, Compassionate Listening delegate, Bill Thompson said that there is concern among many people back in the US when they hear about human rights abuses by the PNA. Rahman retorted defensively: “In the last six months have you heard of big issues [with regards to human rights violations by the PNA]?” This reply was followed by an encouragement to also meet with the opposition, implying that would be a more appropriate place to raise his concerns. Leah quickly informed him that indeed, the previous evening we had met with a representative of Hamas. “Good” he said, and then further encouraged us to drill them about human rights and the strategies they are willing to use to pursue their goals. It was during this exchange that the constraints and challenges faced by the Palestinian Authority, along with the frustrations involved with turning ideals and visions into political and social realities became further revealed.

As a founding member of the PLO, Ahmed Abdul Rahmen is among the vast majority of Palestinians who have not always accepted Israel’s right to exist. He recounts for us the turning point in the evolution of his thinking.

I am speaking with you frankly. I did not recognize the right of Israel to exist because I believe in what the Israelis believe about Palestine. No, not like that. But, I told you maybe (speaking to Leah) about the lady whom I met in Geneva in late June, 1969. I am at that time mobilizing students for the armed struggle against Israel, of course. When I finished the meeting with the students, this lady is sitting in the corner, there. Maybe she understands some Arabic, I don’t know. She came after the students left. She sat. “Can you invite me to have a coffee with you?” “Yes, of course.” She said to me, “I understand some of what you are saying to the students. I have a question for you.” Okay. I saw on her neck the Star of David. I began to understand who was this lady. She asked me this question: “Look, maybe my father was from Russia, my mother from Hungary. Maybe they are from the United States, but for me, I was born in what you call Palestine and what I call Israel. What is

your solution for me?” She asked me this question: “What will you say to the students about me? I am a human being. What will you say?”

From this moment forward, as Abdul Rahman expressed, his thinking was changed. He became a student of Jewish history. What he has learned while reading and studying about the Jewish people has been an important factor in how he has come to accept Israel’s right to exist, and further to advocate for Israel’s security needs.

Similarly presenting himself as a student of Jewish history, Faisal Hussein’s perspectives on peace were also informed with an understanding of Israel’s needs, at the same time that he advocates for Palestinian interests. As noted by many within the group, during the first few minutes of our time together, Faisal Hussein recounted a version of Palestinian history—a story characterized by dispossession, persecution, resilience and fortitude—that echoes narratives about Jewish history. Faisal Hussein was a senior Palestinian official renowned for his commitment to human rights and peace with Israel. Since the 1980s he had been establishing and maintaining relations with the Israeli peace community. Coming from a family of landowners and political leaders, it was Faisal Hussein himself who established the Orient House (originally as an Arab study center) in an old Hussein family mansion. The Orient House has become the national headquarters of the Palestinian people in East Jerusalem and as such, it has often hosted cultural events, particularly ones of political relevance to Palestinians. He died from a heart attack unexpectedly on June 1, 2001, at the age of sixty.

The November 1999 Compassionate Listening delegation met with Hussein at the Orient House. During this meeting he emphasized his vision for how peace

with Israel could become a reality. Similar to Ahmed Abdul Rahman, he relayed this vision through personal experience that highlights how he places his own evolution from freedom fighter to peacemaker into an historical context.

Maybe what helped me is that I was from a family that was all the time leading the struggle for the Palestinian people and against the Israelis. My father was killed [in 1948]. So, no one can say that I am a stranger to this struggle. I am part of this struggle. And, when I found that I am able to sit with someone who was fighting my father, and try to make peace with him, this is something that needs to be understood. Because, I believe that if my motivations, when I am fighting someone, if the main motivation is hatred, because of the hate, I will not reach anywhere. But, if I was fighting the Israelis, not because I am hating them but because I am loving the interests of my people, if this is the reason, so we can make peace.

Similar to Ahmed Abdul Rahman, Faisal Hussein appeared to be modeling the kind of attitude perspective that he believed would lead to improved relations between the two sides and facilitate a peace deal.

Faisal Hussein's message is compellingly rational, while playing to a high moral ground. He emphasized repeatedly how Palestinians have come to see that it is in their best interest to pursue practical rather than ideal goals of justice. This was the conclusion many have reached, he explained, when realizing that Israelis have their own understanding of history, one which leaves out the historical, cultural and religious rights of the Palestinian people. Assuming this is unchangeable, the Palestinians began realigning their political goals.

This is what pushed us to accept UN resolution 242.... I am talking about only 22% of what I believe are my rights. There is the homeland and there is the state. Okay, we would like to have a state. The other thing is a dream.

He pleaded for the Israelis to meet the Palestinians with their own set of compromises.

Okay, we can have a Palestinian state alongside an Israeli state, beside an Israeli state, providing that [they] will accept 242 and both sides will live beside each other. And, let us accept these lines which was not the Palestinian dream, which was not the Israeli dream but it is the border which can say okay, you are here, I am here, and let us finish this problem.

What followed is an historical account of why further compromise would be unacceptable to the Palestinians. His ultimate vision was stability, peace and prosperity for the region. He saw a Palestinian state is a necessary step towards this goal.

To move in this direction, there must be a willingness to understand one another, a willingness to acknowledge that both sides have wronged the other, and then a willingness to work together to move on.

In response to a question from one of our delegates, foremost what Hussein wanted for our group to carry home with us was a vision of coexistence, a vision of the two peoples living side by side. By adding to this a stipulation, his idealism was placed back into the murky reality of power imbalance that exists between an occupied people and their occupier.

Any kind of solution must be balanced. [It must be] a solution between two equals. Not a solution between a strong and a weak [party]. Not a solution between horse and rider, but a peace between two human beings. This is the first matter that I would like you to convey.

The vision of a peace based on peaceful coexistence and defined by equity and justice is one that was articulated repeatedly by Palestinians at all levels of the society. It was also a key theme emphasized by the third official that we listened to: Haidar Abdul Shafi.

Leah warmly and respectfully refers to Haidar Abdul Shafi as “the good doctor.” Born in Gaza in 1919, Abdel Shafi was among the founding members of the PLO. By profession, he is a physician who obtained his medical degree in Dayton,

Ohio, and who is currently the director of the Red Cross Federation in Gaza. He is broadly respected as a man of integrity and has been a long-time proponent of a less PA-centric (and less Arafat-centric) Palestinian leadership. He is also Commissioner-General of the Palestinian Independent Commission for Citizen's Rights. In the mid 1920s Haider Abdul Shafi's family moved from Gaza to Hebron because of his father's job. He recalled the sizable Jewish community there who lived peacefully side by side with the Palestinians. He cites examples of peaceful coexistence and friendly relations between Jews and Palestinians that were part of his everyday life as a young boy. His family had returned to their home in Gaza by the time the Hebron massacre occurred. In 1929 Muslim militants from Jerusalem agitated and organized a revolt against the Jewish presence in Hebron and as a result 68 Jews were killed. When he heard about the massacre he recounted how sorry and distressed he was over the incident, happy only to learn that many Jewish families were saved by Muslims who sheltered them in their homes during the massacre.

These early childhood memories of good relations between Jews and Palestinians have important significance for Abdel Shafi. Making a related point, on three separate occasions during his time with us, Abdel Shafi told about how, during the Madrid talks, the Palestinian opposition, Hamas, called on people to demonstrate against the talks, and they did just the opposite. They demonstrated for the talks. This latter story made the point that the Palestinian people were prepared and willing to make peace. The former story implied that Palestinian opposition to Jewish immigration to the region is not the root of the conflict. The root of the conflict, according to Abdel Shafi, stems from the Zionist imperialist objective to establish a

Jewish state in all of Palestine. This objective was adopted at the first Zionist conference in 1897, where he claimed that it was also decided that this goal could only be realized through the use of force and with the support of a superpower. Flashing forward to the present he concluded: “It doesn’t appear that the Israeli leadership has abandoned anything of what was said in 1897. And so this is the gist of the matter.” It is Israel’s imperialist objectives that had the situation at that juncture at an impasse. Importantly, as his stories emphasized, the Palestinians are able, prepared and willing to make peace. The kind of peace they long for is one, which is not imposed through coercion and violence, but rather an equitable peace between the two communities.

One of the challenges in a conflict situation is that history can look very different depending on how this history has been experienced and interpreted. All three Palestinian officials (like the other Palestinian speakers, for that matter) represented the Palestinian situation in a similar way. They all emphasized how Palestinians have been victims of Israeli aggression and how the majority of the population were prepared to make peace, as long as it was a peace which is respectful of their human rights and their rights to self-determination as a people. Further, at the same time that they acknowledge the constraints they experience as leaders, it can be argued that these statesmen modeled this willingness to meet Israel towards the goal of creating a just and equitable peace, based on respect for the interests of both peoples. Stanley Ringler did not argue or contradict any of what was said by the Palestinians. Instead, he emphasized how Israel has repeatedly extended the olive

branch to Palestinians and in turn had been met with rejection and aggression. His version of history is based on a different set of experiences and perspectives.

Similar to the Palestinian statesmen, Ringler began his talk with an account of the history of the conflict. His version of the story began in 1947 with the Balfour declaration. Based on promises that had been made by the British during the first world war, the Balfour declaration, or partition plan proposed by the United Nations, was a moment of celebration for some within the Jewish community, and a moment of deep disappointment and frustration for others. Many felt that land, entitled to the Jewish community was being unfairly conceded to a hostile, Arab world. But, the Jewish community did accept the partition plan, he noted, while it was the Arab community that rejected it. Again, in 1967, after the six-day war, Israel, then under a labor government, publicly made known that they were prepared to concede most of the territory. Offering meaning to these two examples, he quotes Ava Avin who famously said: “Tragically the Palestinians never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity.” In other words, his emphasis was on the degree to which Palestinians, and surrounding Arab nations, are responsible for the current situation.

Ringler seemed to be making two additional points. One, he was making sure that we understood that the conflict, in the early years, was largely between the Jewish community and the surrounding Arab states. The Palestinians were not a legal entity and they were only just beginning to mobilize and articulate their desires for self-determination. Secondly, he seemed to be trying to impress the view that, contrary to what delegates may have heard elsewhere, Israelis are not simply these horrible oppressors. He defends Israel’s integrity by first citing the example of

Jordan, that illegally annexed the West Bank after the 1948 war. He described being a student in Jerusalem in '63 and climbing the YMCA tower (then the highest point in the city) where he could look over the wall that then existed, into East Jerusalem. From this vantage he watched Palestinians rioting against the Jordanians. In 1967 when Israel recaptured the land from the Jordanians, he then pointed out, Israel did not annex this land: "We did not claim to have this right."

He further made the case that Israel is deeply invested in reaching a peace settlement with the Palestinians. He described how Israel's economy and reputation had been hurt by the conflict, and how being an occupying nation goes against Israel's moral vision of itself. While Stanley Ringler was speaking to us as a spokesperson for Israeli's labor party, it is relevant to note that he is also a Reform Rabbi and a former American. While conducting interviews, I furthermore learned that Stanley Ringler is liked and respected by many of Israel's radical left. He located himself by pointing out that Israel's right does not share his version of history and has not been willing to make the same concessions and compromises as has the Labor party. Similar to how the Palestinian officials spoke about how they are accountable to Palestinian public will, Ringler also spoke about the complex differences within Israeli society that serve to undermine progress towards peace. He saw Oslo as an important breakthrough in the conflict; one which was systematically undermined by Netanyahu's right wing government. The result was a new impasse in the resolution of the conflict. The election of Benjamin Netanyahu resulted from huge sections of the Israeli population being unhappy with the Oslo Accords and what they saw Israel losing as a result of that deal. Ringler cited the removal of Netanyahu's government

that came with the election of Ehud Barak as evidence that Israel had “reached a stage in [its] history when we do have to move towards resolution of the conflict and the only way it can be done is through compromise.”

The tension between Israel’s left and Israel’s right is further emphasized as Stanley Ringler speaks to us about the issue of settlements and house demolitions. On the issue of the settlements his position was one which pinpointed responsibility for the situation on Israel’s right, expressing the Labor government’s view as one which was more in line with Palestinian perspectives.

The most contentious issue is the issue of settlements....There are something like a hundred and twenty five or a hundred and thirty five settlements spread throughout the territories, most of them, interestingly enough are very, very small. And in the worst conceivable places. That is, they are in places contiguous to major Palestinian population centers. And they make it impossible for the Palestinians to realize a contiguous territorial landmass which can be constituted as a state, which is what they seek to create. And we understand that. The former government purposefully put those settlements there to prevent that from happening. And we understand that we are going to have to remove most of those settlements.

When it comes to house demolitions, he expresses his moral outrage about the situation, at the same time acknowledging that those in government that agreed with him were just beginning to speak up about the situation.

I am opposed to house demolitions. And for the first time in the history of the state of Israel, there are government officials, people who are responsible, who are saying we have to change this policy and do away with it.

At the same time that he clearly opposed the policy of house demolitions, he complicated the situation by placing it back into a struggle over land. Over the years, he said, Palestinians have been receiving significant sums of outside money to enable new houses to be built in Palestinian East Jerusalem, something which he said had

been a source of intense aggravation for Israel. Meanwhile, Jewish settlement groups are also actively working to take more and more land in East Jerusalem. The needs of both populations must be dealt with in a fair way, he asserted. He was confident that a final peace arrangement would take care of most, if not all of the issues involved with the problem.

Going into the meeting with Stanley Ringler the group was braced to hear things with which they disagreed. Many in the group expressed surprise and relief coming out of the meeting with Ringler at the same time that I heard delegates repeating “it’s so complicated,” somewhat like a mantra as they worked to integrate this new layer of information and perspective. Ringler’s talk both echoed and contradicted many of the perspectives that the group had been listening to. It echoed some of the human rights concerns expressed by the Israeli peace movement and the Palestinians. However, more than any other Israeli speaker, through fleshing out an alternative historical narrative of the conflict, Ringler offered a challenge to the implication that the state of Israel can be defined simply as an oppressive occupier.

The official perspectives presented in this section all add a significant and complicating dimension to the overall holographic-like story that the delegates are exposed to. These perspectives suggest, in short, that politics, like peacebuilding, is indeed complicated. Attending to the needs of one’s constituency, for instance, imposes constraints that are real. And, as the talks presented by all the various speakers implies, where one stands in a conflict dramatically affects one’s point of view. Exposed to multiple perspectives of a conflict means having to grapple with contradictions and disjunctures that are not easily resolved. This was the point being

impressed on the delegates, as expressed through the repeated claim: “It’s so complicated.” adding further to this complexity, the following is a look at what motivates those that meet with the Compassionate Listening Project to do so.

MIXED AGENDAS

As emphasized in the preceding chapter, one of the most noted features of these trips is how informative they are. Compassionate Listening delegates learn about the conflict from a variety of standpoints and perspectives. Through listening to people’s stories, they learn about how people are impacted by the conflict and how they make sense of their experiences. This comes from hearing about the daily struggles of living under occupation, and in refugee camps. It also comes from listening to the fears, suffering, hopes and aspirations of those Israelis who support settlement expansion. Arguably every meeting and encounter during these trips is informative. Noteworthy nonetheless, is the fact that the itineraries for these trips are largely made up of “resource people,” as Leah refers to them. From the Project’s web site, this aspect of the trip is expressed in the Project Summary:

Part of our time is spent learning from supporting Israelis and Palestinians already involved in reconciliation efforts. There are many courageous Israelis and Palestinians who have much to teach us and who need on-going support from the international community.

These are groups and individuals who meet regularly with various citizen groups from Israel and from abroad. Several of the speakers talked to me about the routine nature of meeting with a group interested in learning about the conflict. Sara Kaminker, for instance, was one of the few individuals, whom Leah tried to schedule for every trip. She talked to me about how her organization’s objectives were to

disseminate information by taking people on trips through East Jerusalem and how this was the basis for becoming connected to the Compassionate Listening Project.

That's how Leah found me, because we do these trips, on our own initiative and because people ask us especially to do it. Until a few years ago, there were people who came to Jerusalem who had never gone to East Jerusalem. They simply blocked that part of the city out and I wanted them not only to see East Jerusalem, the problems of East Jerusalem that I always talk about, but I want them to hear about those problems, not only from me, but from the people who are living those problems.

Jeff Halper, as another Compassionate Listening *regular* who organizes alternative tours of Jerusalem and parts of the West Bank, spoke to me in succinct terms about how the Compassionate Listening Project is a part of the outreach component of his activist work with ICAHD.

Leah's group fits in, in that it's a net. It is another group in which we use to get the word out.

For the majority, if not all, of those that meet with the project, their motives for doing so are directly linked to wanting to inform, persuade, enlist and/or mobilize. While some discussed the personal and psychological benefits of being listened to, only one person (Hussein Issa) named this as a top motive for meeting and speaking to the project.

In addition to "getting the word out," several of the regulars spoke to me about how they see themselves acting in a resource capacity. Rather than being a recipient of the gifts of listening, they envisioned their role as one which offers a service. As one of the Advisory Board members for the Compassionate Listening Project, Yehezkel Landau meets with Compassionate Listening delegations whenever

he can. This is how he spoke to me about how he saw his role whenever speaking to a delegation.

I like meeting with groups. But I don't do it for myself. It's fieldwork. I'm a resource person. I'm supposed to help them to wrestle with the issues here.

Like many of the speakers, Landau is a seasoned public speaker, who adds a significant page to the complex, multi-faceted narrative that the Compassionate Listeners receive. He is someone who has worked for peace between Israelis and Palestinians for a long time. Similarly, as another veteran of the Israeli peace movement, Jeff Halper described his role with the project in a similar way:

I'm not familiar with the whole compassionate listening philosophy and approach so that I'm—I'm less committed to that. And I see my role more as providing context, providing analysis, background, getting people out to see what is going on. So, I'm a resource and information person like that.

These informants to the project are all part of the Israeli peace movement's alternative information network. It is significant to the character of the project that these groups make up a good portion of the Compassionate Listening itineraries. Yet a fuller sense of the complexity of the project is offered through an examination of other speakers and the meanings they derived from these encounters.

Palestinians were very clear about what they want their visitors to take away from these encounters. Repeatedly, Palestinians expressed an appreciation for the opportunity to represent themselves, in contrast to the ways in which they feel they are misrepresented in the media. Despite her limited English, one of the hosts for the home stays expressed this notion with exacting clarity:

[Outsiders] have the idea that the Palestinian people are so harsh, they are terrorists, they are violent. But, when they see a Palestinian for real, they will know that this is a conspiracy of the media.

In January 1998, Faisal Husseini was instrumental in hosting a screening of the Compassionate Listening Project's first documentary, "Children of Abraham" at the Orient House in East Jerusalem. In addition to the Compassionate Listening delegates in attendance were Palestinians from East Jerusalem along with several Israelis from West Jerusalem. Speaking with an Orient House official about the event, he expressed to me how he saw this as an opportunity to dispel stereotypes about the Orient House and about Palestinians:

The general idea among Israelis was that [the Orient House] is a kind of horror house. They are afraid to come here, really. I wanted to spread the idea that this is a normal place. Human beings are here, who speak and listen and discuss.

Similarly, Kayed, a United Nations Relief Agency worker and a resident of Fawwar refugee camp, was very clear about how he hoped that his meeting with the Compassionate Listening Project would serve to correct the common misperception about how Palestinians hate Israelis. The circumstances of this visit combined with his clarity of intention serve to underscore how important that this intention was for him. The fact that Leah often finds herself confirming and arranging meetings up until the final minute has special significance to the November 1999 delegation's meeting at the home of Kayed. Our delegation was on the bus headed in the direction of Fawwar refugee camp while Leah was on her cell phone trying to confirm a scheduled visit. There was a problem, a mix-up of some sort about the original meeting. Leah was working her way through her network of contacts to arrange a back-up meeting. Kayed reported receiving a call from his cousin asking if he would be prepared to host the group. He and his family had little time before the busload of

Compassionate Listeners pulled up in front of his home. There was no evidence as to how spontaneously arranged this meeting was. We were warmly greeted and invited into his living room. Family and neighbors crowded around us to share in the event and as soon as we were settled in the first in a series of beverages were served.

During this meeting, Kayad told a story that had the room full of Americans literally in tears. The story involved a cousin who had lost a child in a car accident. The child died in an Israeli hospital and it was thus an Israeli doctor that asked Kayed's cousin if he would like to donate the child's organs. When the cousin said yes, the doctor made sure he knew that these organs would most likely go towards saving the life of an Israeli, probably a Jew. The father of the dead child said that it didn't matter to him, that if his child's misfortune could contribute to saving another family from the grief his family was experiencing, then this is what should be done. It didn't matter if that person might be Jewish, because "we are all human beings." When I asked Kayed about telling this story he was quick to explain what it meant to him:

I wanted to distinguish between the political conflict and the humanity of the people. So for me, all people are the same: Palestinians, Israelis, Americans, all the people are the same to me. But now I have a political conflict with the Israelis about specific rights that I am being denied. And I am struggling, struggling for my rights. And this must be clear. If I have conflicts with the Israelis, it doesn't mean that I hate the Israelis, I don't hate the people. I don't hate the children.

Kayed saw the meeting as an opportunity to express his feelings and his understanding of the conflict. He saw this group as a network, through which he might persuade and influence:

I'm sure that each of them would be in touch with some friends, with other people, so maybe they can change the ideas, the minds of other, or

themselves, maybe they will change their own minds about what is going on here in Israel.

More than any other intention, Palestinians expressed to me their understanding about the United States' role in the conflict and how they assumed that Americans in general, and American Jews in particular therefore had the power to help their situations.

The idea that American citizens have the capacity to impact the conflict in ways that will potentially benefit Palestinians was expressed to me in different ways. Hisham's sister, Tahani had been hosting Leah's delegations since the beginning. Speaking to me, in particular about the days of the first Intifada, she expressed how she links hosting with political action:

For me it was the only way to fight. I wanted people to know about Palestinians and their suffering and their struggle. Here, for men or for boys, they used to go out to the streets and hit the cars with stones. For me, I thought if I can talk and assure people about how the Palestinians feel, because these people will go back to their country and talk about us. So it was a good idea to share our experience with Americans...I knew [the delegates] are important. Most of them are highly educated, and they can affect their students, maybe, or their community.

Others saw the visits as an alternative to armed struggle. The visits are seen by many as an opportunity to "change the mentality of the other side, or of the side that is backing the Israelis." This was explained to me by one informant as "a civilized way of dealing with the conflict." Hisham built on this theme of American influence to help resolve the conflict. In talking about how Palestinians are often misperceived and misrepresented he was quick to trace the influence of the delegations back to their

home communities. In doing so, he assigned specific powers to the religious Jewish delegates.

Because all the time, we were the Palestinians who are the liars according to the media and who are the terrorists and we only blame things on the Israelis. And now we have a Jewish ally who is American *and* who is a religious Jew. Nobody will accuse him of making up what he tells.

The need for allies was perhaps most passionately expressed by another host to the delegates:

What can I tell you? This is difficult, really difficult. Because we need people, we need nations to stand beside us. This is what I want. I can't do anything alone. I need a group, I need a nation, I need countries to stand beside me.

Further emphasizing the importance of creating and maintaining allies, some made clear that the Compassionate Listening Project was one among many with whom they maintain relations. Hussein Issa from Hope Flowers School talked to me about the importance of having a support system that comes from the many groups that visit his school. "We have other friends, you know, not just the Compassionate Listening Project".

Support obtained through friendship with foreign groups like the Compassionate Listening Project was a theme emphasized by several Palestinians I spoke with, although in different ways. As illustrated above, many emphasize the importance of gaining political allies in their struggle. Parallel to this is the psychological and emotional support that was especially important to some of the key regulars. Hisham, for instance, emphasized the importance of seeing familiar faces among the groups that travel through:

I have lots of meetings with different groups: Compassionate Listening, Christian Peacemaker Team, Fellowship of Reconciliation. Lots of people are

coming to me and many times, Israeli groups, American groups and so on. And sometimes if I see, like, among some of the faces there are people who are coming back, that like gives more encouragement. I think, this is somebody who knows about our situation. This is very important. You start feeling like somebody is backing you, supporting you, understanding.

Hisham reiterated the emotional support he had received from the visits when he tells about how one of Leah's delegations surrounding his hospital bed during the first Intifada. The original meeting on the itinerary became replaced by this hospital visit when Hisham received a gunshot wound in the leg during the first Intifada. Offering another example, when delegates visit the Hope Flowers School they always pass through the school's gift shop. Items made by the children are sold to help support the school. Delegates make generous purchases and often offer an additional donation to the school at the same time. While acknowledging how these contributions help the school, Hussein downplayed the importance of this kind of support in comparison with what he called the "spiritual support" that he received. Described as inner strength and renewed conviction, this *spiritual support* that he received from his friendships with like-minded groups. It was this sharing of ideals and visions for a more peaceful world that was what he said he valued most about his relationship with Leah and the project.

Many expressed how the change in perceptions and attitudes that came from these visits was happening in both directions. In other words, the trips serve to do more than change the listeners, the speakers too are changed. Hisham told about how, in the beginning, he could not imagine that his family would receive a Jewish person into their homes. The first few times that she came, he hid the fact that Leah was Jewish. Now, he says that when Leah comes there is a fight in the family over who

gets to have her stay with them. Plus, his family and many members of his community now openly receive Jewish American and Jewish Israeli friends into their homes. Mosa is one of them. He talked to me about how hosting foreigners, especially those that are Jewish, as something that is received with trepidation among many within Palestinian society. He told about his first experience hosting a Jewish person in his home. His sister asked him how he could do it? Wasn't he afraid that at night the person would wake up and stab him? Israelis are seen as the occupiers. Palestinians in Hebron come into daily contact with Israeli soldiers. Many of these experiences are negative ones. At the same time, Palestinian residents of Hebron are living next to the armed and openly hostile settlers in the city. These encounters are then the primary basis of their experience of Jewish people. As a consequence of this circumstance, Palestinians in Hebron hold deep animosity towards and fear of Jewish people. Hisham's sister, Tahani talked with me about how Palestinian society in Hebron is very conservative and therefore the hosting of foreigners was something that was frowned upon by members of her community. According to Tahani and others with whom I spoke, having people come on a regular basis has made the community more open and receptive to outsiders, particularly Jewish outsiders.

Although every Palestinian I spoke with was interested in how these meetings would help to foster support for them, there were differing views about the agenda of listening and the "apolitical" stance of the group. Some saw it as valuable—one of my informants called it "clever"—to avoid political discussions as the main focus of the trips and to focus instead on the personal experiences of those living under occupation. An intention to listen fit well with this. As one of the hosts for the family

stays put it: “If you listen, it’s good. You are open to things. And if you talk to different people, you can decide for yourself what is good and what is bad.” The idea that the situation within the Palestinian territories has certain self-evident features was one which was expressed repeatedly. “When you see things with your own eyes, you will see the truth” is how one speaker put it. The truth that they assumed to be self-evident has to do with the character of Palestinians and with the injustice of the occupation. Countering the view that listening and looking was enough were those who wanted more of a political commitment on behalf of the project. Mosa, for instance, seemed eager for the opportunity to share with me his critique of the project in this way. He said, “I told Leah, and I told many of them, I still criticize them because they haven’t taken a political position concerning the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.” He emphasized that he sees the project as important, but less important than it could be if it embraced a political stance in solidarity with Palestinians. For him, taking a political position means being committed to action: to writing and speaking out. Interestingly, those less concerned with this feature of the project were no less interested in the action they hoped that delegates would take on their behalf. Their assumption was this action would be inspired from their experience, not from some pre-established stance of solidarity with Palestinians.

This section is not complete without a look at how those located on Israel’s right made sense of the encounters. Noteworthy in this regard are the ways that the views among those located on Israel’s right echoed Palestinian voices with whom I spoke. Both sides had similar things to say about the project. For instance, among those I interviewed, I heard it expressed repeatedly how they too were happy for an

opportunity to represent themselves, to counter the ways that they feel they are vilified in the media. Furthermore, some also saw these encounters as an opportunity to promote their political agenda. For instance, a representative from Beit Oron that I spoke with was clear about their goals for the meeting:

Because we are the only presence on the Mount of Olives, we want to impress people with the reasons that we're up there, and to let people understand the geographical context as well as the political and ideological context. But, very much the geographical context of why it is important. So that is why [the yeshiva] is particularly interested in having people *see* that part of the city, in that context.

Again similar to many Palestinians, this informant insisted that the intention was not to persuade, but rather to *show* people what it is that they find threatening—the surrounding of Palestinian populations on lands sacred to the Jewish people—and let them come to their own conclusions.

Apart from these generalizations, I observed less coherency about what these visits meant for those on Israel's right with whom I spoke. While all expressed an appreciation for the fact that there was an American group interested in understanding the situation of the conflict more fully, less clear was what they hoped to gain from this. Rachel, for instance, was adamant about her lack of any political agenda:

Because I knew they were coming for a certain reason—to understand the situation—I thought maybe I have something to offer. That was all. I just wanted them to hear what I feel. That's it.

Everyone I spoke with characterized the group as politically to the left. Some had a problem with this, while others did not. Sima, for instance, was one who didn't seem to mind that the groups also would meet with Palestinians. In her case, I came to understand through speaking with her that in large part this was because she wasn't

framing her contact with the project in terms of the conflict at all. Sima had been among the residents of Kiryat Arba who had chosen only to meet with the Jewish delegates from the group. For her, the encounter was an opportunity to meet with a part of her Jewish family from whom she felt alienated. She understood that this was a group open, searching to connect with the land of Israel and that they had included her—as a Jewish settler—in their searching. That is what mattered to her. She asked me: “How can you make peace with the Arabs when within your own family there are so many divisions?” This one rhetorical question revealed to me how the particulars of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, by the standard of most discursive perspectives, were actually remote from her way of thinking.

Following the listening encounter with Rachel and her daughter Maryanne, the two ate dinner with the Green family. As told in the previous chapter, this encounter had not gone well. The Greens had “fallen out of Compassionate Listening” by posing pointed questions about the conflict. But, already during the listening encounter that evening, Rachel had expressed defensiveness over what she already perceived the group’s agenda to be. The group had been curious about relations with surrounding West Bank neighbors and one listener had brought up injustices experienced by Palestinians in one of her questions. Given what we had done to Native Americans in our country, Rachel replied, what moral authority did we have to be in Israel inquiring about concerns of injustice? When I phoned Rachel requesting an interview, she was clearly eager for an opportunity to talk to me about her experience that night. When we eventually met and spoke she emphasized how

she cannot separate her identity as an Israeli from her identity as a Holocaust survivor. This was important to what upset her about the evening:

They don't do us any favors to bring people here and show them how bad we are. I felt that I was blamed. Blamed for just being here. And I was blamed before, already, because I was in a certain place.

Rachel was angry over the encounter and what she thought the group's intentions to be. She expressed this directly: "I felt that [Leah] is bringing along other people to show them how wrong we are. And I was very upset about it."

Rachel went on to acknowledge that the creation of Israel resulted in hundreds of thousands of Palestinians losing their homes. Yet, given the circumstances she defends against this being made out to be her fault.

I don't say it is nice for those people who had a house and had a place to live and they don't have it any more. Because I know what that means. It's not all right. But the question is: what do we do? We are fighting for survival. What do we do? If these people come back, what's going to happen?

The unintended clash during dinner with the Greens undoubtedly colored Rachel's experience and what she shared with me. This does not nonetheless make Rachel's responses any less revealing. It demonstrates what a sensitive challenge it is to reach into certain communities.

CONCLUSION

A look at those that the Compassionate Listening Project meets with, what they have to say and how they are making sense of these encounters reveals to what degree the project is operating in a socially constructed terrain that is highly politically charged. Further, the mixed agendas of all these actors sometimes converge and sometimes are at odds with one another. Buried in these differing

agendas are hidden theories and assumptions about social change—and in particular, how peacebuilding—is best pursued. At the heart of these differences can be observed strategies that prioritize, on the one hand, the mending of relationships and on the other hand, the amending of injustices. How do the intentions, meanings and strategies of the Compassionate Listening Project and its delegates interface with this complex landscape?

Leah's goal is to raise consciousness about the conflict without further polarizing the situation. She aims to mend relationships, while emphasizing social justice concerns. This agenda is what shapes her choices as she crafts the complex itineraries of these trips. As I show in this chapter, she prioritizes the representation of certain groups: those involved with peace efforts or social justice work; Palestinians who are directly impacted by the conflict; Israeli's opposed to the peace process and officials from both sides. In almost every case she is giving representation to voices and perspectives that are marginalized within the dominant landscape of the conflict. Combining the Compassionate Listening model with this itinerary, she has created a discursive space where alternative narratives about the conflict can be heard by North Americans. The speakers who meet with the Compassionate Listening Project all appear to do so for similar reasons: they all want to be heard. Yet, this desire to be heard is not for the inherent emotional and psychological benefits of being listened to, as the project's methodology emphasizes. Their goals are predominately related to representation and to inclusion. For those on both sides of the conflict, the most common objective expressed has to do with contesting and challenging dominant narratives: narratives that equate Israelis to evil occupiers; Palestinians to terrorists;

and, narratives that leave out the suffering that is experienced by those for whom the conflict has a daily, lived dimension. Many of the speakers do note the benefits of these encounters in terms of the emotional and spiritual support they receive, as well as the shifts in personal perspectives that come as a result of the encounters. But, these benefits appear to be the byproducts, and not the goals of the meetings. For the most part, the Compassionate Listening Project is seen as a vehicle for “getting the word out” and for creating new allies and friends.

The speakers all seem to be operating upon similar assumptions about how one goes about changing one’s social world. There is an inherent trust in the compelling nature of the “truth” that they each deliver. They bank on the self-evident nature of these truths in order to win friends and allies. Winning allies in this way serves to potentially transform the conflict, according to this thinking. Adam Curle has articulated this strategy, as I highlight in Chapter Two. It is a strategy that places an emphasis on conscientization: raising awareness about the inequities of power and the injustices that people experience as a result of these inequities (Lederach 1997, 64). The fact that these speakers are seeking to win allies among North Americans is not incidental. The popular consciousness of North Americans is perceived by many to be an influential arena, where ignorance about the conflict is linked to the intractable nature of the conflict. Winning North American allies potentially means shifting the balance of power within the conflict. In this regard, many of these speakers can be seen as conscious agents who engage with the Compassionate Listening Project because it is seen as one possible avenue through which they can

work to create the conditions upon which they believe a lasting peace can be established.

In the case of many of the Palestinians, their agency is accompanied with a notable sense of hope and expectation about how their Compassionate Listening friends may be mobilized to act based on what they hear and see. In an article identifying key differences between Western and Middle Eastern approaches to conflict resolution, Mohammed Abu-Nimer (1996) reveals certain cultural assumptions that may be of relevance to this sense of expectation. Importantly, he notes how Middle Eastern culture relies upon the outside pressure of community and society as a crucial factor in dispute resolution processes. Relationship is therefore often a key element in settling disputes (46). With these cultural assumptions in mind, the long-term relationships that the project has established with many of its Palestinian speakers may serve to reinforce this sense of expectation. On the other hand, a reliance on social pressure and relationship in dispute resolution processes is largely foreign to Western individualistic notions of conflict resolution, which emphasize legal processes and downplays relationship (40). Extrapolating from these differences, there is some basis to speculate about how, from a Palestinian perspective, these encounters may be presumed as the basis for some kind of follow-up or obligation to those with whom delegates meet and listen to. Whereas, for the North American delegates, whether or not they act on behalf of those they listen to can be construed as largely a matter of personal choice, as opposed to social obligation. The implications of this scenario are further explored in the following, concluding chapter.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

In many significant ways, when I began this research in 1998 we were all living in a very different world from the one we now inhabit at the start of 2005. The implications of this study must therefore be read in light of this newly emerging context. In July of 2000, less than a month after having returned from conducting my field research in the region, Camp David II negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians collapsed and the subsequent violence would be soon to follow. The disintegration of the peace process and the outbreak of a second Intifada provide the most immediate context from which the processing and analysis of my data has been conducted. Furthermore, when this research was first initiated, the events of September 11th had not taken place. That historic day triggered into motion a wave of militarism and nationalism in the United States that would profoundly transform the geopolitical landscape of the Middle East, as well as the national character of this country. The events of this macro context have cast a dark shadow on peace and the practice of conflict resolution. A study such as this one, which looks at small groups of ordinary North Americans acting with the hopes and intentions of peacemakers in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, must be examined within the dim light of this shadow. Whatever else might be said, it must be acknowledged that when it comes to peace, we live in hard times.

Granted that within the context of this dark shadow, many saw the start of 2005 as a return to the mood and environment of 1999 and 2000 for the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. The death of Yasar Arafat in November of 2004 marked

the beginnings of a fresh era of Palestinian history and politics. The January election of Mahmoud Abbas as the new Palestinian President gave rise to hopes for both democracy and a return to the negotiating table. Yet, despite several meetings and gestures on the part of both Palestinians and Israelis, the first months of 2005 have shown little progress towards the rejuvenation of the peace process. The March hand-over of the West Bank town of Jericho to the Palestinians can be considered a start, but arguably, this is only a small step towards changing the intolerable conditions of occupation for Palestinians' daily existence. Regardless of the optimism that marks the start of the new year, unless Abu-Mazen (as the new Palestinian leader is also called) can show Palestinians that the non-violence he advocates, as opposed to the Intifadah, can bring real benefits, these renewed hopes are dangerously fragile (Isseroff 2005).

Ironically perhaps, the logic and praxis of peace have never been more relevant, nor urgently needed than now, during the early, dark and fragile years of this new century. And, it is arguably the logic and praxis of ordinary people engaged with the matters of war and peace that will be what most determines whether this century will repeat, or even outdo the bloodshed of the last. This is one of the key points of a book written by Jonathan Schell (2003): *The Unconquerable World: Power, Nonviolence, and the Will of the People*. When it comes to social transformation, Schell argues revolutions are fought and won first within the imagination (387). Building on this, Rebecca Solnit (2004) cites February 15, 2003 as an important indicator of where the collective imagination may be leading us. It was on this day that somewhere between eleven and thirteen million people marched and

demonstrated on every continent against a war that had not yet begun (25). From this view, the fact that these demonstrations did not serve to stop the war does not dismiss the unprecedented display of people's power and their demand for non-violent solutions to conflicts. Arguably, while we may live in dark times, these are times ripe for connecting the theory and praxis of conflict transformation and peacebuilding with what ordinary people are prepared to do for peace.

At the heart of this research is the assumption that ordinary people can play an important role in the constructive transformation of an intractable conflict. Because citizen peacebuilding is a relatively new phenomenon, this study is based upon the further assumption that there is much to learn about them and that citizen peacebuilding efforts themselves have much to learn. From this, I selected to do a case study of the Compassionate Listening Project, as an example of citizen peacebuilding for two key reasons. One, I was compelled by what it appeared that the project was trying to do in combining an exposure to social justice concerns at the base of the conflict, at the same time as it applied a methodology that sought to transform enemy relations, however enemy ended up being defined. Two, I was compelled by how the project appeared to be combining and traversing various ideological, social, political and physical worlds. The entangled relationship between activism and relationship building has special relevance to the rise of citizen peacebuilding, in general, and to the Compassionate Listening Project, in particular. Given these reasons, I came to see this project as a valuable site for examining the way ordinary people, from a variety of locations, are making sense of the interconnected issues of identity, conflict and peace. More specifically, this research

has revealed how some citizen peacebuilders are making sense of and negotiating this tension between resolutionary and revolutionary approaches to peace. The results of this research, as I argue below, have implications for conflict resolution theory and praxis, for citizen peacebuilders, as well as for the Compassionate Listening Project itself.

Jonathan Schell and Rebecca Solnit are not alone in their emphasis on the power of imagination when it comes to social transformation. In a Keynote Presentation delivered to the Association of Conflict Resolution 2004 Annual conference, John Paul Lederach claimed that the essence of peacebuilding lies in something he calls “the moral imagination.” His description of what he means by this offers a valuable sign-post in the task of revisiting the findings in this data and in the attempt to assess their implications. According to Lederach, the essence of peacebuilding is deeply grounded in the realities and circumstances giving rise to conflict, but, (and this is crucial) it is not limited by them. Present, therefore, is the capacity to “[give] birth to that which does not yet exist.” Rooted yet not bound, the moral imagination contains the power to create new possibilities that are relevant to existing realities and challenges. We cannot escape the fact that we are all embedded in patterns of complex and overlapping relationships. And, it is our ability to act knowledgeably and creatively within these webs of relationship that is arguably what gives strength and vitality to efforts of peacebuilding.

My assumption about the viable and promising role that citizen actors can play in arenas of conflict is therefore not unqualified. In a sense, the purpose of this investigation all along has been to illuminate the ways in which the Compassionate

Listening Project and all of its diverse constituents are operating (if at all) with the moral imagination that Lederach ascribes to the essence of peacebuilding.

Deciphering reality and the web of relationships to which we are a part requires both knowledge and skills. It requires the self-reflective capacities, sensibilities and practices that Michele LeBaron (2002) describes as the third wave of conflict transformation practices (10). Importantly, these are the capacities that support us in the task of understanding how the internal realities of identity and perceptual difference manifest into the dynamic, external realities of social conflict. Interior and exterior worlds are linked through the awareness we bring to them.

Embracing the Question: So What?

In order to make sense of the Compassionate Listening Project and its complexity, I identified its three defining features and examined them each in their respective social, political and historical contexts. As I have explained, the project has its roots in the ideals of the people-to-people citizen diplomacy movement of the Cold War era and it employs a conflict intervention methodology (Compassionate Listening). The combination of these two features has had important implications for how the project has developed. The project is firmly grounded in a tradition that values reaching across adversarial divides and developing relationships based on openness, curiosity and care for the humanity of the Other in situations of conflict. This feature is deepened by the application of Compassionate Listening that has the effect of directing and focusing delegates' attention towards the concerns and realities of those that the delegates go to listen to. The third defining feature of the project—

its' third side nature—functions to take into account the relationship that these delegates have to the conflict and those that they listen to during the delegations. Further, it serves to take into account the kinds of activities and actions that take place in connection to the trips.

During the November 1999 visit to the Yesheva of Beit Orot, a representative voiced her complaint about how the Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem receive benefits from the Israeli government, without paying municipal taxes. This claim was challenged by a later visit with Sara Kaminker, who, when asked about this, offered to produce the records that document Palestinian municipal tax payments. As the meeting with Sara was breaking up, I watched Leah approach Sara for a copy of one of the city documents. In March of 2000, which was the subsequent meeting with this same representative from Beit Orot, I watched as Leah very quietly handed her the document while reminding her of what she had said during the earlier visit. In that instance, Leah was arguably performing the third side role of mediator, facilitating communication between parties in a shuttle diplomacy fashion. This story serves to expand on the many prior examples of third side roles performed by the Compassionate Listening Project delegates and organizers. My observations of these roles—such as the witnessing a home demolition; protesting unequal power relations through participating in a demonstration; or contributing to healing through demonstrations of care—was facilitated through Ury's delineation of these roles and their functions. Albeit ad hoc in nature, they are essential to the nature of the project.

When I first read John Paul Lederach (1995) as he described feeling tossed between his social justice world and the world of mediation (11), I recognized the

tension he was describing from various aspects of my own experience. As a feminist, for instance, links between the personal and the political carry a strong resonance. Yet, I recall watching with concern during the 1980s and 1990s as notions of consciousness raising and personal empowerment appeared to become co-opted by a personal growth movement devoid of a substantive political agenda. On the other hand, experiences within politically oriented groups, such as the American Green Party left me yearning for a greater emphasis on self-reflective awareness, and relational capacities that foster a sense of inclusion, participation and belonging. Rarely have I encountered what seemed to be a successful integration of the two sets of values: a value for developing personal capacities and awarenesses on the one hand; and a value for addressing the structural basis of social problems, on the other.

A project that was potentially doing both caught my attention, at the same time that I saw reason to suspect that this project might in actual fact be valuing the personal over the political. This concern stemmed from a couple of observations. One is the context out of which the project was born. Given that we live in an affluent capitalist society based on strong notions of individualism, my experience tells me that the personal is often at risk of being valued over the political. Secondly, the project has roots in a social movement—the people-to-people movement of the Cold War era—that was built upon philosophies of action that rejected both activism and politics. Further, as a North American-based project, its participants could not escape that participation in such a project is in fact an exercising of both economic and geopolitical privilege. Rather than challenging asymmetries of dominance and control, as representatives of established hegemonies of power, the actions on the part of these

delegates serve, in important respects, to reinforce them. This is reflected in the way many of the Palestinians I interviewed place their hopes in what these delegates might do to help alleviate the difficulties of their situations.

In her classic piece on white privilege, Peggy McIntosh (1988) investigates what it means to be accountable for the privilege we embody through social location and identity. Reflecting on her own experience, she articulates how ill equipped many of us are in naming and identifying our privilege:

My schooling gave me no training in seeing myself as an oppressor, as an unfairly advantaged person, or as a participant in a damaged society. I was taught to see myself as an individual whose moral state depended on her individual moral will. My schooling followed the pattern my colleague Elisabeth Minnich has pointed out: Whites are taught to think of their lives as morally neutral, normative, and average, and also ideal, so that when we work to benefit others, this is seen as work which will allow “them” to be more like “us” (247).

In identifying her “knapsack of privilege” through the process of mining conditions of daily experience, McIntosh makes a distinction between privileges that should belong to everyone in a just society or world, and privileges that “give license to be ignorant, oblivious, arrogant and destructive” (249). While clearly giving value to the process of raising our daily consciousness about the ways we are embedded in systems of overlapping privilege, she poses a crucial question: “What will we do with such knowledge?” Raising a similar question, Jeff Halper articulated his own internal conflict over the implications of bringing groups of North Americans to visit Palestinians who have been victims of house demolitions. His concern is that when the emphasis is on what these visits do emotionally and psychologically for the

delegates, then the speakers become an instrument of transformation for a privileged few.

You know sometimes the emphasis is on transformation of the participants in the group. And in a way, the people [we] have met with along the way become sort of objects to that. They become people who are raising our consciousness and our awareness. But, then, great. So what? So Ata Jaber has raised the consciousness of America somewhat. But then he's still stuck trying to deal with the oppression.

Halper's question (So what?) is one that I assume that he poses as a way of staying in relationship with it. At the same time that he feels compelled to raise this critical question, he also spoke to me at length about the transformative power of education. Further supporting this conclusion is his continued willingness to meet and speak with Compassionate Listening delegations. Yet, he seems to be begging the question: in the case of the Palestinians, do they have an equal and symmetrical opportunity to learn and grow out of this process? This question becomes especially important if the project aims to do more than raise awareness for its North American delegates.

While for many of the delegates the emphasis is often placed upon the transformative aspects of the trips in general, and the various encounters more specifically, less clear is who and what is being transformed. For some delegates the focus is on their own transformation of consciousness, for others it is the transformation of Other. Sometimes Other refers to Palestinians, and sometimes Other means Israelis who hold ideological and political views in direct opposition to delegates' views. Still other times a more general reference is made to the transformation of the conflict. In all these instances, the emphasis is on the informational, psychological, emotional and relational aspects of the encounters.

While the value of these kinds of transformations is not disputed, none of them serve to address the more direct concerns of Ata Jaber and the oppression he lives with on a daily basis, at least not directly. Halper's question is therefore one of responsibility. His question suggests that when we ask ourselves *What will we do with such knowledge?*—the knowledge garnered through informational, psychological, emotional and relational transformations—we owe a responsibility to the less privileged subjects of our listening. While there is substantial information provided to the participants about ways to take action based on what they hear, importantly it is up to them whether or not they do so. There is no way the project could impose an obligation to act on behalf of those who appeal for their support. Yet, as I note in Chapter Six, cultural differences may be at play, influencing delegates' sense of choice about whether or not they follow-up, on the one hand, and Palestinians' sense of expectation that they will, on the other.

The speakers I interviewed all seemed eager to take advantage of the opportunity to inform the consciousness of these North American delegates with information they saw as vital to the transformation of their realities. While many Palestinians did report that they appreciated the care expressed through listening, the majority of speakers operated with an agenda that has much more to do with transforming social and structural realities. As such, they sought to persuade, convince, inform, and mobilize their compassionate audiences. They spoke to delegates with several aims: changing the way North Americans perceive them; changing American foreign policy; and gaining supporters for their perspectives, problems and projects. They tell the listeners what they do because they are hoping

and expecting that in turn, these North Americans will do something to help them. In other words, in many cases there appears to be a misalignment of expectations between delegates and many of those with whom they meet and listen to.

Importantly, were the project to address this misalignment, by including advocacy as one of its objectives, it could only do so by contradicting the design and intention of the project. Because the project is designed to expose delegates to both sides (or, multiple sides) of the conflict, any action taken on behalf of one speaker may potentially betray the wishes of another. Yet, while the project aims to foster compassion and understanding for everyone who is impacted by the conflict, the project is not, nor does it claim to be, neutral. While many delegates expressed an appreciation for gaining a greater sense of understanding for the world views and experiences of those on Israel's right, I did not encounter one delegate who did not seem clearly against the occupation, and who did not express concern about the plight of Palestinians. The vast majority of delegates arrived with these views, and therefore the trip served largely to inform or deepen these perspectives. However, there were those who arrived either "clueless" or embracing mainstream Zionist perspectives that left them largely uninformed about the realities experienced by the Palestinians. The evidence suggests that for these individuals as well, they came away from the trips with newly acquired, reformed and/or strengthened views about the injustices endured by Palestinians under occupation, and for who and what is most responsible for perpetuating these circumstances. So, while the project does not take an advocacy stance, it is clearly oriented in a particular direction.

When posing the question, (*So what?*) it is further important to note the ways that listening is an active process. First, listening can be a powerful way to inform consciousness with new information. This can, in turn, inform and mobilize action. That these trips do mobilize delegates to act on behalf of the injustices that they are exposed to is evidenced through delegates' spontaneous giving and joining in activism and protest on the part of delegates throughout the trip. As most clearly demonstrated through Bill Thomson's example, delegates build on the relationships created during the trips for the purposes of advocacy. These delegates listen compassionately for the purposes of informing their actions. Secondly, listening can also be an effective way of communicating interest and care for the lived reality of another. In fairness to the delegates, it can be acknowledged that it takes enormous initiative—regardless of one's relationship to the region—to voluntarily spend two weeks listening to the complex and difficult realities of conflict and war. This fact did not appear to be missed even by those who had their expectations disappointed. Finally, listening can serve to inform, infuse and expand conflict narratives. In this regard especially, the fact that the project does not taken a clear stand on the conflict serves to further create a discursive space that feels safe and acceptable for a wider range of individuals. Here too, the evidence suggests that delegates generate and share stories from their experiences during these trips that serve to validate the humanity, perspectives and desires of those most affected by the conflict. Nikki Landau's sermon during Rosh Hashanah stands out in this regard. There is plenty of evidence that documents how former delegates share stories informally with family

and friends; through writing and publishing in a variety of forums; and through public speaking in classrooms, synagogues and other public places.

When someone is committed to changing the structural conditions at the base of a conflict—*those revolutionaries concerned with the world out there*—it is the tangible results of our actions that is often valued over the intangible results. Compassionate Listening as a methodology or process is directed towards changing the world within and between parties. As such its focus is often on the intangible outcomes of our actions; changes in attitude and perception, for instance, that potentially serve to restructure the emotional and relational geography of a conflict. Throughout this thesis I've argued that it is both the tangible and intangible results of our actions—actions that address both the world out there and the world within—that are necessary components of conflict transformation. Yet, the Compassionate Listening Project, like the conflict resolution field more generally, has been largely established upon revolutionary approaches to social change, rather than the revolutionary approaches embraced by most activists and social justice advocates. Increasingly, however there is an interest in the field for how to embrace both approaches to social change simultaneously (Lederach 1995, Abu-Nimer 2001, Galtung et. al. 2002). How can our work mend relationships and address injustice at the same time? This is a key question that has been explored through taking a close look at the Compassionate Listening Project.

At a certain moment in the history of these delegations, Leah Green made a decision to adopt Compassionate Listening as the project's *modus operandi*. In doing so, she made the choice to embrace the intangible over the tangible—resolution over

revolution—when it comes to outcomes she sought to pursue. When asked about this choice, she told me that as a consequence she has had to give up advocacy. Yet, stepping back from advocacy and activism, from my observations, has not meant stepping back from the social justice concerns embraced by most advocates or activists (such as Jeff Halper) who are engaged with the conflict. She maintains a wide net of relationships in the region, particularly with members of the Israeli peace movement and with Palestinians engaged with non-violent resistance, and she has a reputation as a well-respected friend and ally to both. And further, she constructs the itineraries for these trips in a way that—while perhaps not taking sides in the way that some would like her to—does suggest an informed and engaged commitment to a disparate world of peace advocates at work, on the ground in the region. It appears that Leah has made a consistent effort to stay in relationship with Halper’s question *So What?* Aligning herself with a focus on the internal geography of the conflict, she has kept in close relation to the issues, perspectives and concerns of her revolutionary friends. The example suggests that one way to negotiate the tension between competing approaches to social change in arenas of conflict is through staying in close relationship with the injustices and inequalities—those asymmetries of dominance and control—at the base of most conflicts.

Replication, Growth and Expansion

The central driving force of the Compassionate Listening Project is Leah Green. Despite how important other members and their contributions are to the organization, without Leah’s vision and the relationships she has built, it is reasonable

to question whether or not the organization's citizen diplomacy work in the Middle East could continue to exist. The fact that Leah is the central face of the organization could be attributed to the small scale of the organization, or it might be some function of her personality. It goes beyond the scope of the study to assess this and its implications. Yet, when observing the qualities that can be attributed to Leah's successes, I believe it is relevant that these are all attainable human qualities that can be found in many individuals. Most noteworthy in this regard is Leah's long-term commitment to the conflict and to the region. This has been expressed through the personal relationships and contacts she has maintained over the years. Her knowledge about both the conflict and the cultures of the region has won her widespread respect across a diverse network of people. Plus, the skillful manner with which she handles and addresses differences have aided in developing a wide range of relationships. While arguably a rare combination, the fact that these are all possible human qualities, exemplified in many people suggests that the Compassionate Listening Project is a model that could be sustained beyond Leah's involvement, or even duplicated, as long as these qualities—commitment, knowledge, respect and skill—remain central to the operating practices and principles.

Consistently throughout its evolution, the Compassionate Listening Project has expanded and grown. In addition to outreach into both Jewish and Palestinian communities, Green has consistently broadened the scope of the project with a diversification of project activities. Workshops and training for Israelis and Palestinians have been one area of diversification. In the days directly following the May 2000 delegation, six delegates from that trip joined the project's facilitator,

Carol Hwochinsky, along with Leah Green to lead the first Israeli-Palestinian 2-night residential workshop, sponsored by the Israel Interfaith Association. Held at the Hope Flowers School, in the West Bank village of El Khader, this workshop was attended by three Palestinians and seventeen Israelis. Following this first workshop, several more have been organized and carried out by the project, paving the way for a Facilitator Training program in Israel and Palestine that was launched in 2002.

Workshops in Compassionate Listening have become an ongoing feature of the project. In addition to the regular workshops that are conducted throughout North America, the project has also conducted workshops in Holland, Switzerland and Germany. Workshops are now classified as introductory and advanced, with a certification track for individuals interested in teaching Compassionate Listening. Further expanding the geographic scope of the project, as of this writing, the project has led two delegations to Syria and Lebanon, and two all-Jewish Compassionate Listening delegations to Germany, one in September 2003 and a second trip in October 2004. As a spin-off from these delegations, a German-Jewish delegation into Israel and the Palestinian territories is being planned for the year 2006.

Since the beginning the project has been producing documentaries about its experiences. While still with the Earthstewards Network, Green produced a 32-minute documentary, mostly chronicling the voices heard during the delegations. A second film, of a similar length, loosely documents the journey of the twenty-two Jewish Americans that traveled on the first Compassionate Listening delegation. Through the hundreds of public screenings that have taken place throughout North America, this film has become the key promotional tool for the project, since its

release in 1998. A second documentary, film, “Crossing the Lines: Palestinians and Israelis Speak with the Compassionate Listening Project,” released in July 2002, contains in-depth interviews with fifteen Palestinians and Israelis, selected from many hours of footage from delegations that have taken place since the outbreak of the second Intifada.

In addition to the films, the project has received various types of media attention. In addition to the many articles and interviews published in popular magazines and journals about the project, Rabbi Andrea Cohen Keiner, was recently featured in a CBS special: “Crisis in the Holy Land.” New York Times, best selling author, Gary Zukav (2000) has devoted a chapter in his most recent book, *Soul Stories*, to Green and the project. In addition to the talks frequently given by the project team, the growing community of Compassionate Listening alumni who have returned from delegations speak regularly at public forums and are interviewed on radio. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation plans to produce a show for national television on the German-Jewish project. Leah continues to find outlets for articulating her vision. In a book released in January of 2005, in a co-authored chapter of a book by Jennifer Read Hawthorne (2005), Leah describes further how she sees Compassionate Listening becoming a significant catalyst for transforming our world.

Limitations and Avenues for Further Research

The focus of this study has not expanded along with the growth and expansion of the project. The growth of the Compassionate Listening Project and the resulting diversity of its programs and activities therefore fall outside the scope of this

research. Given limitations of time and resources, I ignore the training programs as well as the citizen delegations to Syria and Germany. I focused on the Compassionate Listening delegations, particularly as they pertain to Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza up until July of 2000. In a further sense, this research is not able to assess how the second Intifada has affected the project and its constituents.

As stated in the beginning, this research was not designed to assess the impact of the Compassionate Listening Project. A follow-up or parallel study with that aim would, I believe, offer a further contribution to what we know about how this project may be serving to transform the attitudes and actions of individuals, and how that may be serving to influence communities. If one were to conduct a study of this sort, a focus on Compassionate Listening alumni and the work they have done in their home communities seems like an obvious avenue to pursue. For this, site visits would offer the chance to trace some of the potential ripples of the project by talking to community members who have been the audience of the stories with which many of the listeners have come home and shared.

Especially in light of the collapse of the peace process and the outbreak of a new cycle of violence, it could be of value to assess how this has impacted attitudes and perceptions. A follow-up study that was designed to investigate such changes could be valuable in a number of ways. It could, for instance, be instrumental in assessing how the Compassionate Listening Project, as a model for intervention, might be valued differently depending upon what the phase of the conflict in question. While conscious that this research was being conducted during a time when there was a peace process to speak of, it is important to note that this study was not

designed as a longitudinal or comparative study. Therefore, I can only speculate as to the degree to which this context was an operating factor in what I observed about the project. Related to this, Louis Kriesberg (2002) has posed questions about the relationship between increasing expectations on the part of Palestinians during the period of the Oslo process and the outbreak to violence. He is especially curious about the way that reconciliation efforts may have been instrumental in raising those expectations. Of concern here is the way that reconciliation efforts may have unwittingly contributed to this new cycle of violence. A follow up study, designed to interview Palestinian speakers could provide insightful evidence in this regard.

This project was designed as a case study largely because I was interested in creating an ethnographic-like portrait of the project that is embedded in its historical, social and political context. Given the complexity of the project, I wanted a design that would tell me something about all its facets and the relationships that exist between these facets. While I believe that this design has served well for offering an in-depth, somewhat holistic look at the project, it has its limitations. My research looks at how delegates have made sense of their experiences, it is not designed to assess or measure the impact or effect of these delegations on the delegates or the speakers. Nor is it designed to assess or measure the effects of Compassionate Listening. In Chapter Two, I suggested that research investigating the context of listening processes could be of benefit to conflict resolution and peacebuilding practices. Further, in my methods chapter, I note how my background has limitations with regards to observing and analyzing how culture is a factor in the various Compassionate Listening encounters. Therefore, I believe a more focused look at the

implications of the differences between Western and Middle Eastern approaches to conflict resolution at play in citizen peacebuilding efforts would be valuable.

In my introductory chapter, I note what is distinct about this project by comparing it to a project that is similar: the Reality Tours of Global Exchange. Another way I might have approached this study, might have been as a comparative study of the Compassionate Listening Project and the Reality Tours of Global Exchange. I could have traveled with each of the two projects as a participant observer, interviewed a sampling of delegates from each of the two trips and then conducted speaker interviews of speakers on those groups and individuals who meet with both project. The advantage of this approach would be that it would give some basis for assessing the two approaches to social change embraced by these two citizen diplomacy projects. Such a design would have given a basis of comparison for determining how Leah's decision to add the Compassionate Listening component has served to make the project distinct. My reason for rejecting this design initially had to do with the extra time and resources I assumed it would require. Were I to design this research to do again, I would be strongly tempted to try this approach.

Another limitation of this research is that much of the secondary data—particularly the writings of former delegates—are from delegates who were motivated and inspired from their experience. The easy availability of these sources serves to privilege these experiences. At the same time, I have little data from those who traveled with a delegation and then returned to their lives without a visible trace of how they are making sense of these experiences once they are home again. A sampling of interviews from previous delegations designed to capture the spread of

perspectives would be likely to produce a much more diverse portrait of how people are making sense of the project and their experience in retrospect. It might further provide some basis for assessing who stays active with the project and who goes away and why. It might further provide some insight as to how positive changes in attitudes and perspectives may have endured given the collapse of the peace process. This could offer some evidence as to the sustainability of the internal transformations that were inspired from the delegations.

Beyond the Compassionate Listening Project there is much research to be done on the topics of citizen peacebuilding and the so-called tension between mending relationships and addressing issues of injustice within the conflict resolution field. Related to both these topics, a survey of citizen peacebuilding projects and efforts—including both activist and reconciliation efforts—would serve well to help identify and define this arena. Susan Allen Nan (1999) makes the case that our assessments of conflict interventions are often inadequate precisely because they leave out the way that different interventions overlap, contradict or compound one another. Particularly while I was in Jerusalem, I was struck by the extent to which organizations and individuals advocating for peace seemed to be functioning as a gigantic network that extended all the way to North America and Europe. While conducting interviews I gained a sense of how both activists and those committed to conflict resolution were making sense of the tension that is at the center of my research. I believe it a more thorough investigation into the world view differences that make up this network would reveal some fascinating and valuable discoveries

about the organic way that conflict resolution is informing the world of activism and visa versa.

Trusting the Dark

On June 9, 2003 an email in my inbox read “Compassionate Listening on NPR.” A few clicks later and I am listening to a nineteen minute radio spot about Nasser Laham, a Palestinian TV journalist in Bethlehem who has a nightly TV show where he translates Israeli broadcasts into Arabic. According to this NPR report, Nasser learned Hebrew in an Israeli prison during the first Intifada and is now devoted to using these language skills to build bridges of peace between Israelis and Palestinians. Nasser says that it is important to know about the suffering of one’s enemy. In this regard, he translated hours of broadcast from Israeli television of the annual commemoration of the Holocaust. Similarly, whenever there is a suicide bombing in Israel, Nasser translates Israeli broadcasts of the event, thus exposing Palestinians to the tragedy that is experienced by Israelis. During this interview, Nasser also explains that he is part of a group who does training in non-violence and compassionate listening. He describes compassionate listening as a way to listen to someone with whom you deeply disagree. Unlike so many Palestinians who have become friends with Leah and with the Compassionate Listening Project over the course of years, Nasser Lamah is unknown to the project leadership. It is therefore not known how Nasser learned about Compassionate Listening and came to espouse it as a personal and political strategy for peacebuilding between Israelis and Palestinians.

In her book about hope and activism in dark times, Rebecca Solnit (2003) makes an eloquent case for the unknown effects of our actions. Her message is: “It’s

always too soon to go home. And it's always too soon to calculate effect" (3). She recounts an anecdote that she once read about a group of women peace activists who later reported feeling foolish and insignificant as they stood in the rain protesting nuclear proliferation in front of the Kennedy White House. Despite feeling foolish at the time, the effects of this action eventually came to be known to one of these women:

Years later she heard Dr. Benjamin Spock—who had become one of the most high-profile activists on the issue—say that the turning point for him was spotting a small group of women standing in the rain, protesting at the White House. If they were so passionately committed, he thought, he should give the issue more consideration himself (4).

This story, similar to the story about Nassar Lamah, illustrates one of the core difficulties in assessing an effort such as the Compassionate Listening Project. When the ground of civil society is seeded through actions and ideals, certain seedlings may sprout far out of sight of those who did the scattering. John Paul Lederach (1997) supports this claim by affirming how spaces where “diverse but connected energies and concerns” can meet is an important aspect of the reconciliation process, in this case, the reconciliation process within and between the wider communities of Arabs and Jews (35). Arguably then, it is the process of encounter, rather than their outcomes that can be regarded as significant. These encounters thus can be seen as a small piece of a much larger peacebuilding and reconciliation puzzle. Carol Hwochinsky similarly articulates a trust in the unknown effects of our actions. She frequently references chaos theory to make the point that the positive ripple effects of the Compassionate Listening Project can never completely be known. Rebecca Solnit is one who writes about the indirectness of direct action. She makes the case:

“Nobody can know the full consequences of their actions, and history is full of small acts that changed the world in surprising ways” (66). The truth of this statement is linked to how the power of these Compassionate Listening encounters within the arena of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, like the power of direct non-violent action, is located in the immaterial, symbolic terrain of political discourse and the collective imagination.

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