

Beginning the TREK to the Middle East to Learn and Serve.

Our Journey to Jordan----- Children of the Earth dedicates itself to youth forming a movement for positive change and becoming the voice of evolving conscious unity of humanity.

Children of the Earth Board members, Diane DeTerra and Patrick McCollum and I (Nina Meyerhof) travelled to Jordan to lead a workshop with Common Bond Institute on . Our workshops addressed **Youth as Social Activists Transforming Spirituality into Leadership.**



Children of the Earth's focus is TRANSCENDING CONFLICT using our model to look holistically and from above, seeing there are parts that equal the whole and thus the answer for a solution lies in that pattern rather than separating out right vs. wrong or working towards compromise.

Jordan's population consists of 30 % Jordanians and 70 % Palestinian immigrants. At this CBI meeting in addition to some Westerners it was attended by Jordanians, Palestinians, Lebanese, Syrians, and some Jewish Israelis. The combination caused much upheaval, as the groups did not know the Jewish people would be participating. This led to much discussion and upset. Naturally our approach was and is different. Our focus is to find the point of unity where we are one humanity.

Most of the other workshops focused on dialogue and how to become intimate with each other's perspective. We, instead , offered a powerpoint and then went into REFLECT. Amazingly we

found the anger dissolve and the group be more unified. We then did a CONNECT on Listening skills. One of the characteristics we were told was that these Middle Easterners do not learn to listen to each other in their dialogue process so this was an exceedingly meaningful exercise. In addition, realizing that many of these youth pray 5 times daily it seemed going inside was an easy step and is an internal home in a certain manner. Thus the REFLECT exercise that we offered was to say I am not my body, not my emotions, not my mind. Who Am I? seemed so natural to them. There was little resistance. All this led to further amicable relations.

The following day to our surprise a larger group reappeared and wanted more. There were some members who had come the prior day and when we reviewed what occurred a few had total recall. This so impressed us. The group shared who they were as people and their understanding of spirituality and expectations. Then they asked recalling the powerpoint .how to create ACTIONS. We determined to identify skills within the group from diplomacy from Patrick to writing skills to media expertise etc...then determining to set some goals and from this what Action could be planned for helping create positive social change. We were stopped due to time constraints but energy was flowing and very much alive thus they wanted to form a Chapter to continue working with us.

For the three of us as trainers, this experience was very educational. Firstly, we wished we had youth with us in order for youth to really integrate with these youth. Jordanian youth express deep loving gentleness except when it comes to their political MidEast situation. The integration of spiritual perspectives with these religious youth would have been important for all involved. We learned that the Jordanian males hold a culture of honour and graciousness. The young women are expressive and active in society and cared for by the males of this culture. Our youth could learn from them as well. Integration of cultural perspectives and building of friendships.

We learned how very powerful our work could be and how we must start to tease apart the components of our models with exercises. We learned that we could and did go above the differences and into our model for peace. It was and is effective even in the most difficult of situations where hate can rise up like a dragon at any moment. We were collectively able to create a loving atmosphere and feel PEACE for creating more PEACE . We could, with more time, do even greater work. We would like to take time for real action planning for social change.

One story that stands out in my memory is meeting a man from Jerusalem who was the Manager of the Jail for the Palestinians and was here together with some of his former prisoners to make PEACE. In addition, there were members from a group who had suffered physical loss from both political side such as loss of a child, husband, mother or relative. They came together here to share and make peace. It was very hard on some and less on others. Some walked out. Some expressed hate. Some spoke with loving intentions. This is life in the MidEast. There were many explanations and many stories and many refugees wandering from one country to another.

Our work is to unite and not focus on separations. In this loving environment we might be naïve but on the other hand we had visible proof of our potential to create peace from inside to outer...not by focusing on tolerance but on our higher understanding of oneness and love within

each of us. The three of us TEAMING hope to continue this passage and work with more youth especially where they are now becoming a voice of a seeking uprising for change.

We are a spirit/peace youth organization that works with youth around the world to create positive social action through local projects as well as organizing other youth.... translating our mission into a movement. Youth with proper skills and inner realizations could initiate a relevant transforming of society. We believe in peaceful changes that include skills in dialoguing with the "oppositional party" to create a holistic understanding and conversation. If you look at Mandela, King or Gandhi they each had methods that truly impacted not only their own country but also the world at large. We believe that embedded in all religions is a heritage of peace so it would be our purpose to uncover this and bring forward these memories. With these memories a youth movement that does not instill fear but rather love and compassion could stand out as a poignant movement. We are training young adults as well as leaders to learn these skills and then develop goals for social change and go into peaceful warrior action.