

**DEAR COEXISTENCES' FRIENDS,
FROM OUR ASSOCIATION'S ASPIRATION TO REALITY, WHAT IS THE REAL IMPACT ON THOSE WE HOST?**



TESTIMONY Here are a few recent testimonies from members of «Mont Blanc Breaking the Ice» group which made it to the summit of the Mont Blanc during the 2010 summer

Testimony #1

“Breaking the Ice program has positively influenced my life in several ways, more than I can describe, but here I managed to write about 4 aspects :

First and foremost the true adventure and challenge in the mountains, along with the excitement of being elected for such a unique project, has taught me a lesson about self-confidence and about reaching personal goals.

Second, many new friends and interesting people have become part of my day-to-day life. Starting with my own teammates (Jews and Arabs) and also a few more "by-product" acquaintances. Definitely another lesson, this one about human-relations, friendship and commitment.

The third change is on a larger scale. Today I am incomparably more aware of political and social issues. I feel that my judgment ability has improved towards a more balanced and less biased point of view, now that "I know what the other side thinks" and spend lots of my time dealing with these issues. This has led me to understand that what we perceive as justice, equality, freedom and democracy - not what they have always seemed to be. In my country today, Jewish or not, the majority is simply being denied all sorts

of general public and social rights. Hidden corruption of all kinds and in all levels is now being uncovered in all sectors on a daily basis. The public understands that there is always someone with private motives pulling the strings for his own short-term profit at the society's long-term expense.

This means that the government and all the things that it stands for are now being doubted, and as a consequence, also the public's loyalty to the state and its fundamentals. For this matter, I feel the "state" has always made the "people" believe that Arabs and Jews cannot live together, that Jews must live in an all-Jewish state, that all the Arabs are trying to eliminate all the Jews that one must chose to be "with us or against us". These insights, coupled with rising extremism (mostly on the Jewish side) make it clear to me

that the forced division between Jews and Arabs only profits a small group for the short-term, and the rest of us are paying, and will continue to pay, the heavy price of short-sighted and narrow-minded politicians. Bottom line - I am less inclined to identify myself with the "state's" aspirations. Last but not least, the fourth change involves the conflict. Thanks to the three processes I mention above, I can understand better now the roles and meanings of Zionism, Jews, World politics, Colonialism and Force in the history of the conflict. That's why I fell less biased. For the first time I am able to think about things like people who were killed in '48 but were not Jewish so they are not commemorated anywhere. that's what the Arabs mean when they say that the flag and anthem do not represent them."

Testimony #2

"Dear François,
How to summarize what I've been to in a few words? This is not an easy task, at least not for me:
I think about this expedition more as a journey that integrate 3 levels of relationships: the intrapersonal level (how I felt during this journey as a person, what have I felt, thought, and behaved), the interpersonal level (how I felt in relation to ALL other participants around me), and the intergroup level (how I as an Israeli Jew felt in relation to the other Israeli Arabs who participated in the journey).

To be honest, the strongest level for me was the intrapersonal level. I felt I experienced a unique experience, a one in a lifetime. Another strong level of relationship for me was the interpersonal level- the relationships between ALL participants, without being labels as an Israeli Jew or as an Israeli Arab.

As a psychologist, it was a beautiful "field experiment" in social psychology for me. All the abstract theories I learned of became very live and vivid for me. The third level- the intergroup one- was the shallowest one for me (and I think it is a good thing). I had a good time with some participants or some disputes with others, but none of these experiences were based on religion or nationality

I have good memories with both Israeli Jews and Israeli Arabs. In a retrospective view, I didn't think about my friends during the journey as Jews or as Arabs, I thought about them as my friend, as persons, as human-beings."

Other testimonies are available to read under "Testimonies" page of our website www.coexistences.ch. As these, the other ones are sure to move you and comfort you in Coexistences' mission you are contributing to.

IN SHORT

NEWS FROM TALI

Arab and Jewish-Israeli teacher's participants

Daniela et David Hersch, visiting Israel a couple of months ago, met with some of the participants who reiterated the good impact the trip had on the group dynamic and the motivation each derived from their work as they had felt their work was recognized and valorized.

The principals of these schools wish to undergo the same process and we are therefore considering this possibility.

MONT-BLANC

The 2010 climb of the Mont Blanc, now a movie

The successful climb of the Mont Blanc by the first Breaking the Ice group in August, having received a large media coverage and reaching the summit having been captured by Pascal Bourquin from the TSR, a movie has been pulled together. It is called "Where are the borders?". The June fundraising diner was the occasion to show it for the first time to members and supporters of our cause, and has been welcomed with much interest and sympathy.

Since, « Where are the borders? » has been selected for showing at the 43d Alpine film festival of the Diablerets and will be shown Thursday 16 August at 6pm. Massimo Sandri and François Feihl, the key players of the Mont Blanc projects, will be present and will happy to welcome you that day.

This movie will also be used for fundraising and spreading the word about Coexistences' cause.

FUNDRAISING DINER

The diner organized at the City Pully movie theater attracted 60 persons in spite of the good weather and the Mothers' day.

It was an important event as it took place in the framework of the Israel-Palestine movie festival lasting two weeks, and combined a concert, the diner and a movie show.

The fundraising diner started with a sefaradi and arabo-andalous concert by Nathalie Elbaze, Amine Mrahi at the oud and Hamza Mrahi at the kanoun. Following the diner, the movie "Where are the borders?" about the Mont Blanc climb of 2010 was presented by Massimo Sandri, François Feihl, Pascal Bourquin who had captured the reaching of the peak, and Félix Sandri movie director. The evening closed with « Promises » from Justin Shapiro (2001).

It was a beautiful and rich evening, and the food was as always delicious. Our thanks to the Events team for their magic touch.

COEXISTENCES' STAND

Coexistences at Chailly-sur-Montreux.

The organizer of the two days Chailly-sur-Montreux event, having heard of Coexistences' cause, generously offered a well located spot where a number of us could provide information about our 2012 projects and sell to the benefit of the association tasty oriental food cooked with dedication and passion. Thanks to all those who contributed that day.

NEWS FROM THIS SUMMER'S GROUPS



YMCA 2012, 6 – 16 July

The ten girls aged 16 to 18 arrived past Friday 6. This group is constituted of the best participants to the various dialog groups of the last 2 years (among which Omer from Piece of Peace2011 and Margalit from PeaceBomb2010).

They are hosted in 5 families among which two new ones we are very happy to welcome.

To raise the profile of the Jerusalem YMCA and its inter-comunautary work, a multicultural event is being organized by this group. The event will take place on September 20 at the Jerusalem YMCA. The group is led in its work by Shira (facilitator of the « Piece of Peace » group and well experienced in events organization) and Moona (who came in 2009). The trip to Switzerland will allow the group to reflect upon the dialog necessary to the organization of this first event.

They met with Renaud de Wattewille, a well known name in Switzerland for his event management career, to discuss their project so far, and got a Public Speaking training. They alternated dialog sessions and relaxing time and also spent 4 days in Arolla in the Valais region.

The farewell evening of Sunday 15 allowed everyone to get to know better this shining yet grounded group.

Mont Blanc Breaking the Ice 2012

23 august - 6 September

The group is now complete. 5 young Israeli and 4 young Arab Israeli were chosen among some 60 applicants, the first week-ends of acquaintance and preparation took place and the preparation in Switzerland is well under way. The Wednesday September 5 farewell evening will allow you meet the group. It will take place at the refuge des 4 vents in Pully from 7pm onwards. More details will be communicated in due time.

We look forward to seeing many of you on September 5 for the farewell party of the Mont Blanc 2012 group.

Last and not least a Café Coex is planned for 11 September from 7pm onwards with the projection of a movie on racism followed by a debate. More details to come soon.

In the mean time, we wish you a wonderful summer, many and beautiful moments with your loved ones, and wish you a restful summer break.

Contact : francois.feihl@chuv.ch

Looking forward to seeing you at one of our events,
Warmest regards,

Fiuna

**In the name of the Communication group
and of the association.**