

# NEWS

# 27 /

COEXISTENCES / OCTOBER 2016



# NEWS

## 27 /

“I was able to approach the other’s heart” they say. Tali, Her Voice, Breaking The Ice, three groups from Israel with the desire to pursue the dialogue. All three went back with the firm determination to further their commitment. For many of the participants this was a unique experience and an infectious joy for the host families and volunteers in the association. And, at the same time, over there, a film was made... because, YES! We did it! Return to the heart of a summer.

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FUNDRAISING EVENING	3
THE THREE TRIPS OF THE SUMMER	4
CAFÉ COEXISTENCES	14
IN BETWEEN	15
TAKE UP YOUR AGENDAS	16

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SHIRA AND SANA / HER VOICE 2016

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# NEWS

# 27/

## FUNDRAISING EVENING, 2016 19 JUNE

### **HIGHLIGHTS OF OUR SEVENTH FUNDRAISING EVENING, ORGANISED BY DOMINIQUE BENMUVHAR, JULIETTE BRULL, AND TATIANA HONEGGER, WHO DESCRIBE IT TO US:**

The sun finally came out on this 19 June and lit up our hearts to welcome our traditional fundraising evening, in our, yes “our” refuge of the 4 Vents in Pully...The tables are laid, beautiful, elegant, copperplates and brass and antique kilims add an oriental touch –as always. This evening, drinks will be served amidst a merry hum. But, since early in the morning, the organisation is all abuzz.

And of course the music. Michel Starkier is there with gigantic and heavy material which he has brought along, set up, and he is making sound tests with our two musicians, enchanted by the excellent professional piano that Michel has so generously provided.

Our musicians: two pianists, composers, teachers involved in dialogue, both graduates from the prestigious Jerusalem Academy of Music and Dance. Nadav Greenhut was born in Jerusalem, Nizar Elkater in Lod. They know each other but had never worked together before their rehearsals for our live Coexistences evening. Solo or as a duet, they interpret melodies from contemporary Israeli and Palestinian composers who they want us to discover, then one of their works and, to conclude, Nizar sings one of great jewels of Egyptian music, with the haunting rhythm, Ya habibi ta’ala - “Come my love”- by the unforgettable Asmahan. The public is fascinated by the incredible virtuosity of these young artists, by their exquisite sensitivity, their warmth and enthusiasm. What an applause they received!

In her welcome speech, our president Fiuna Seylan Ongen thanks our members for their beautiful, long fidelity and their support which will help to finance our ongoing projects. But it’s time for the hot and cold buffets presented one after another, punctuated by the music. For the organising trio, it is a real challenge to roll back the years. Dom, our heart and soul of the evening, as we call her, mobilises treasures of imagination, seconded by Juliette and Tatiana.

And in the months preceding the meal, our trio prepares, tastes, tests, precludes, modifies, tastes again, and finally decides, with an unforgiving palate and eye. The general theme of the 2016 meal is Ottoman, provisions made in Istanbul of delectable fresh artichoke hearts, and no end of surprising and delicious discoveries.

Thank you, friends and members, for your unfailing support, thanks to Fred, in the kitchen doing the dishes and cleaning up... thanks to all those who always give a big hand in putting everything in order, thanks to Christian, as good at accounting as he is with a broom and a floor cloth. Our seventh fundraising evening ends in conviviality, music, coexistence. The candle holders that Dom has decorated with doves are still softly burning: Salam, Shalom.

Tatiana Honegger

# NEWS

## 27/

### THE THREE TRIPS IN SUMMER 2016

#### **TALI / JCJCR - FROM 7 TO 13 JULY**

A group of thirteen principals of Jewish and Christian schools in Israel, involved in the *Dialogue and Identity* programme, were invited in July by Coexistences.

The four people in charge of *Dialogue and Identity* who were also present have been building and organising for ten years a multicultural educational meeting around the religious and ethnical traditions of children, in particular those they live in their own homes. According to them, being exposed to other traditions in a positive educational atmosphere promotes religious and ethnical tolerance. Jewish and Arab teachers are trained in the implementation of a programme: "Three religions in the Holy Land" for their class. Then, two by two (Jew and Arab), the teachers lead a series of visits during which their pupils, Jewish, Christian and Muslim, meet in their respective schools and present their religions and cultures to the other.

The aims were the enhancement of the link between these principals and questions concerning the statuses of the Jewish majority and the Arab minority, as well as a reflection about the possibilities to expand this programme.

The first three days were spent in a beautiful chalet in Château d'Oex. Workshops for discussion, mountain walks, evenings dedicated to more personal presentations all enabled the development of a group spirit between these principals who seldom meet during the school year. On Sunday, the group attended the catholic mass in Château d'Oex and exchanged with the parishioners.

Back in Lausanne and hosted by families, they participated in an educational day organised by Anne-Marie Reymond, Sandra Modiano, Delphine Friedmann and Tatiana Honegger. A conference room was made available at the Union de Prilly college by the mayor of this town, Alain Gillieron, who came in person to greet the group. The talks and debates covered the Vaudois school organisation, national language learning and the place of religious education in public schools. The latter theme was presented by Yves Dutoit, managing director of "Editions Agora", which publishes all the manuals intended for the "Religious ethics and cultures" school programme on behalf of the Canton.

> see the movie

The participants had previously viewed the film "Un Monde en fêtes" (A Festive World) produced in the Lausanne region (<https://vimeo.com/151880608#t=0s>). Throughout the day the discussions were intense, but, in spite of the very different contexts and stakes, the speakers and participants identified similar issues. Ruthi Baumgartner magnificently ensured the translation. All agreed that this day allowed everyone to enrich themselves, widen their horizon and consider their own interrogations in a new way.

The principals' reflections concerning relationships between the majority and the minority, the group spent half a day in the Jewish community in Lausanne. The general secretary, Yannick Cohen, presented an overview of the Jewish minority in Switzerland and evoked certain comparisons with the situation of the Jews in France. Then the group went to the synagogue where they were received by Rabbi Lionel Elkaïm. In his presence and that of the general secretary, the midday meal was an opportunity to prolong these exchanges on an informal basis.

# NEWS

## 27/ THE THREE TRIPS IN SUMMER 2016

During the final evening, the principals presented the members of Coexistences with the theoretical bases and a filmed illustration of the *Dialogue and Identity* project

> see the movie

They also expressed their firm commitment to strive for the pursuit of this programme in their respective schools and to draw their inspiration from activities such as the rally “Un Monde en fêtes” (A Festive World): a promising and meaningful message which reunites us beyond frontiers.

**Here are some extracts of the feedbacks sent by the teachers in the Lausanne region, following the educational day ...**

*In all modesty and in our little corner, we have launched our project for all our pupils and their families to feel concerned and for us to get to know each other a little more, to feel good together. It is beautiful to see that there are many of us pulling together; these are just drops of joys which make up an ocean of happiness.*

*I was also very touched by this beautiful moment of sharing. The simplicity, the authenticity and the motivation of those school principals made me feel close to them.*

*I would like to thank you all for these magnificent and unforgettable moments.*

*People, from here or elsewhere, are alike. We all want a festive world and all it needs is to take the plunge and launch projects or sometimes a little boost can help us do it.*

*From my colleagues, I learned that the meeting on 11 July was marked by a friendly atmosphere and exchange with a positive impact. I am happy that everyone enjoyed it.*

*(...) I have the impression that there are no models since each context is different. It is the similarities and the advantages on all sides that must be put forward, in all humility.*

*On 11 July, I believe that the objective of a balanced dialogue between people who are curious to learn from one another was reached. That seems to me to be the main thing!*

Daniela Hersch and Tatiana Honegger

MORAN AND AMIT / HER VOICE 2016



# NEWS

# 27/

## THE THREE TRIPS IN SUMMER 2016

### **HER VOICE - FROM 14 TO 23 AUGUST**

“Respect – Cooperation - Honesty - Dance - Music”. They inscribed these words in their “Constitution”. And once again they gave them all their meaning! For the second consecutive year, a group of fifteen high school girls from the well named Her Voice came to Switzerland to experience daily coexistence. Israeli Arabs and Jews, aged 16-17 who have chosen to listen to the voice of the other. Coming from Haifa, in the north of the country, these girls experienced, far from the conflict, a taste of community life. During their stay, part of a process of meetings over five months, the participants were able to take the measure of the meeting between majority and minority in the Israeli population. Led by Ulfat Haider and Sarki Golan, this work of knowing and recognising the other through their feminine and national identity, continued in the Valais and in Lausanne.

A group of inquisitive, amusing and creative girls shared a few days together at Trient, in the chalet generously provided by Béatrice Giovanoli and Alexis Mozer. Thanks to the beautiful weather they were able to go on mountain walks, regularly punctuated by dialogue sessions. Transported by buses which, as each year, were supplied by the Civil Defence of Yverdon and driven by chauffeurs who were the picture of patience, they went down towards the plain, where they were hosted in pairs by families in Lausanne. During a trip to Geneva, they discovered the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Museum and enjoyed a pleasant harbour crossing by the river boat after a meal at the Bains des Pâquis. On their last day, they listened to a presentation by Germaine Muller, Town Councillor in Bussigny, about Swiss political life and met Léonore Porchet, Local Councillor and President of the Lausanne Green Party. On the final evening they had the opportunity to demonstrate their musical and dance talents.

Ulfat Haider and Sarki Golan, their facilitators, were very happy with the work done in the group and extremely grateful towards the volunteers of the association and the host families who opened wide their doors to welcome these girls. The Bornand family who hosted two of them, tells their experience:

### **COEXISTENCES, IN THE PLURAL**

*We heard about the work of “Coexistences” without knowing the details. And without noticing the plural of the title of this project. Convinced of the urgency to provide dialogue spaces, we accepted this summer to host two girls from Haifa for a few days during their stay in Switzerland.*

*On their arrival, within no time, we realised that we were about to experience important moments. Those who immediately became “our” two girls were motivated, intelligent, prepared. And full of “joie de vivre”.*

*Even though it was not our primary role, this positive ardour rapidly allowed us to share with them and talk about the inextricable complexity of their country. One was Israeli, from a liberal Jewish family. Enthusiastically active in the scout movement, she will soon don another uniform, that of the army. The other was an Israeli Christian Arab. At 17, she is already thinking about leaving the country to realise her dream to become a dancer.*

*The Arab girl went to school in Hebrew. So she was perfectly bilingual and her English allowed her to communicate quite well. The Jewish girl first lived in the USA, her English was perfect, but she didn't know a word of Arabic. The first astonishing rift in this project. But we soon understood that for them this is perfectly normal.*

# NEWS

## 27/ THE THREE TRIPS IN SUMMER 2016

*What amazed us most was that their conversations on the situation of their country – should one say “their”? – were terribly incomplete for both of them. We were able to explain a little the situation of the Palestinians in the occupied territories. In actual fact, Eric was involved in 2013 in a human rights observation programme. For three months, he discovered the situation of the inhabitants of Bethlehem and saw the effects due to the separation/protection wall.*

*As a result, in our conversations with the girls, the detours by Swiss history were far from the ordinary folklore and allowed us to take the measure of our privileges. Peace for centuries, direct democracy, religious freedom...so many themes finally brought tears to our eyes when we realised that what is evident for some represents remote ideals for others.*

*Furthermore, the project to help the “Israeli-Palestinian dialogue” seems to us poorly formulated, at least for the experience in which we participated. Strictly speaking, this group of girls from Haifa contributed towards facilitating the discussion inside Israel, but without really confronting the question sharing of the land.*

*Hence our remark concerning the plural of “Coexistences”. It is not only a dialogue between two partners which should be sought. There is the coexistence to develop because our visions of the work to be accomplished can diverge. And above all, for a dialogue truly “Israeli-Palestinian”, there should be a third Arab partner from the territories / West Bank.*

Eric and Claire Bornand, Puidoux





NIMROD AND ALLA / BREAKING THE ICE, 2016

# NEWS

## 27/

THE THREE TRIPS IN SUMMER 2016

### **BREAKING THE ICE - FROM 25 AUGUST TO 8 SEPTEMBER**

For the seventh consecutive year, ten students from Haifa University, Israeli Jews and Arabs, came for a trek-dialogue in our Alps, led as usual by their facilitators, Ulfat Haider and Asaf Ron, from Beit Hagefen. Selected at the beginning of the year among approximately sixty candidates, five young men and five young women, half of them Jewish and half Arab, comprised this group. An intensive preparation for the trip started last March, with a remarkable event in April: a meeting - organised by the participants - of their respective families, at which all without exception attended.

On their arrival at Geneva airport on 25 August in the middle of the morning, the group is taken charge by the Civil Defence, let off in Lausanne for a reception and midday meal at the Valentin Catholic School (thanks to the unflagging support of its principal, Ahmad Abu Nijmeh, to Coexistences), then they were transferred to La Fouly where they were, as usual, put up in Danielle and Pierre Kohler's chalet. Two days later, departure on foot from La Fouly, with heavy backpacks (18 – 20 kg!), since tents, sleeping bags, food, sleeping bags, food and cooking gear all have to be carried: the principle of Breaking The Ice is to walk self-sufficiently, sleeping out in the open. Luckily, the weather was almost always dry and often sunny. Under the guidance of a mountain professional (Marie-Jeanne Hugon-Mettaz the first two days, then Nadja Schmid), the group progresses - via the Lacs de Fenêtre and the Combe des Planards - towards the Grand-Saint-Bernard pass, enters into Italy, crosses the Malatraz pass, goes through Courmayeur, camps in the Italian Val Ferret, confronts the hard ascension to the Petit Col Ferret, where they cross the frontier again (with no trace of a checkpoint!) and back to La Fouly on 4 September after nine days trek.

I accompanied the trek as an observer delegated by Coexistences. Every day consisted of a four to six hours walk (exceptionally seven), so that it was possible to proceed unhurriedly, without exhaustion, leaving time for the dialogue activities. These were organised in turn by each of the participants, and always supervised by Ulfat and Asaf. The language was Hebrew. The main themes dealt with: identities, Palestinian versus Israeli narratives. The discussions were heated, emotions too. The group struck me as much by the frankness with which the sensitive points are approached as the capacity to listen, the respect and empathy shown by everybody. This non-violence would be - all of the participants told me at some time or another - unimaginable without the links of friendship/fraternity which were established between them during the preparation for the trip, and which the walk in common further strengthened.

Some striking events during this walk: swimming in the Lacs de Fenêtre (2400 m!) in a heat-wave on the first day of the walk, Father Raphael's welcome at the Grand-Saint-Bernard Hospice, a visit to the Fournet-Dessous cheese dairy in the Combe des Planards, and on the last day of the trek, at 3000m, above the Fiorio Refuge, coming into contact with snow, for the first in their life for most of them, sliding and snowball fights guaranteed!

On the next day, back to La Fouly, and at the end of the day, the municipality, represented by Janine Mottier Obrist and two of her colleagues, offered us an aperitif; followed by a fondue-raclette. Some members of Coexistences who had come especially, joined us at La Fouly. Conversations strike up and the Swiss are amazed by the special warmth and friendship the group exudes. Back at the chalet, the atmosphere is euphoric and the evening ends up in dancing.

# NEWS

## 27/ THE THREE TRIPS IN SUMMER 2016

Tuesday 6 September, afternoon: as reliable and punctual as ever, the Civil Defence drivers took us back to Lausanne where Ahmad was waiting for the participants to give them a talk on the Swiss political institutions, with the emphasis on the culture of consensus which allows such diverse populations to coexist quite well.

The return flight was scheduled for Thursday 8. A great innovation as regards the previous years: for their last two nights in Switzerland, the participants were put up, in pairs, by five students from Lausanne. Léa, Olivia, Joan, Anaelle and Samuel were waiting for them after Ahmad's talk and they spent a lovely evening together by the lakeside, before bringing them back to Ulfat and Asaf the next morning. At the farewell evening on Wednesday at the CPO, the five Swiss students were there. They had obviously established a warm contact with their guests from Israel, and some of them declare that they will become actively involved in Coexistences.

Other highlights of the farewell evening: two of the participants present a very beautiful slide show of their trek to their Swiss hosts. Through the enthusiasm of these two girls, through the words they choose to comment the images, we feel that this trip represented for all the participants an extraordinary experience: to feel part of a united group in which everyone had been able to open their heart to the other. Furthermore, the group prepared for us some delicious Middle-Eastern dishes. The end of the evening, with music and dancing, will remain for all a wonderful souvenir.

### **What are the projects once back in Israel?**

First, to organise a new meeting with the families, like the one which took place in April. It should be noted that the group which came last year also did that: Asaf and Ulfat now make sure that each edition of Breaking The Ice be used in this way to create contacts between Jews and Arabs. Secondly, the participants have committed to building another activity involving inter-community meetings; this could be in the form of week-ends in the country, or bar evenings on the campus of Haifa University.

François Feihl

# NEWS

## 27/

THE THREE TRIPS IN SUMMER 2016



Breakfast in the Val d'Aoste under Frasatti refuge

### **Some remarks from the participants at a formal debriefing session (La Fouly, 5 septembre).**

Mazen (Arab) *"I have taken part in a number of dialogue groups. Only Breaking The Ice seemed to me to be effective because it put stress on creating personal relations. Hence the opening towards the others becomes a very meaningful experience"*.

Alla (Arab) *"I was able to approach the other's heart; that is a unique experience, impossible in everyday life; I have made friends for life"*.

Adi (Jewish) *"Before this trip, I had never had Arab friends. Here, we feel like just one group, the Jewish/Arab identities recoil, a good feeling. It came to my mind to learn Arabic"*.

Nimrod (Jewish) *"I have acquired the capacity to see the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in a neutral manner"*.

Christine (Arab) *"The commitment of Coexistences gives me a feeling of hope, I realise that I have rights"*.

Last day of the trek, close to the high mountains near Fiorio refuge



# NEWS

## 27/ CAFÉ COEXISTENCES

**23 AND 24 SEPTEMBER 2016**

**NON-VIOLENT COMMUNICATION WORKSHOP LED BY GODFREY SPENCER**

Since its creation in 2006, the aim of Coexistences has been to welcome groups of Israelis and Arabs/Palestinians to enable them to continue dialoguing, listening to each other, and trying to understand, or at least hear, the other's narrative.

The members of our association come from all horizons: some sympathetic towards the Palestinians and others towards the Israelis, some religious, some atheist or agnostic, people with different political leanings.

What unites us is our conviction that dialogue is the best way and that our long term commitment in this arid work of mutual confidence building allows the sowing of small seeds of tolerance so that one day there may be peace.

This diversity of opinions goes to make all the pertinence and specificity of our association. Indeed, what would it become if it only brought together likeminded people? And how could we then promote the dialogue with the Israelis and Palestinians we receive in Switzerland, if we don't carry out this same dialogue work here between ourselves?

But the effectiveness of our action will be that much stronger when we ourselves are more capable of listening to the others in all their differences, without trying to convince them.

For these reasons, the committee proposed this Non-Violent Communication workshop led by Godfrey Spencer, attended by about thirty of our members.

Godfrey Spencer, a British citizen living in Brussels, has more than 30 years' experience in teaching Non-Violent Communication in complex institutions. He has also a practical experience of NVC in conflict zones. He is endowed with a great sensitivity, is funny, generous and a good psychologist. Very quickly he created an atmosphere of confidence in the group.

At the end of this workshop, the participants unanimously praised the great quality of these two days of meeting and listening to the other. To be renewed, absolutely!

# NEWS

## 27/ IN BETWEEN



### **IN BETWEEN / COMPETITION FOR A VIRAL FILM ON THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT**

We mentioned this in our Newsletter 26 mainly devoted to the 10th anniversary of Coexistences: we are currently launching, at cinema schools in Israel and Palestine, a competition for the making of very short films, to be distributed on the social network as from 2017.

The candidates will have the opportunity to view a documentary of approximately fifteen minutes showing three young people from the YMCA and three others from Beit Hagefen involved in the dialogue process. Their remarks concerning their meeting with the other and what this has meant to them in their daily life are very moving.

Inspired by the content of this documentary each competitor will submit a script. Ten or so projects will then be selected for the realisation of the final film. An international jury has been created to appraise the quality of the scripts and films.

The fundraising launched via the platform We Make It was a success and makes it possible to finance the first documentary and award three prizes to the winners.

This project was conceived in association with Shira Lapidot, teacher at Sapir College in Sderot and facilitator of the YMCA group we received in 2012. Sylvie Berkowitsch with whom she worked at the time, and Asaf Ron from Beit Hagefen are currently giving her a welcome hand since the process has begun. We will keep you posted on the development of the events. A warm thank you to those of you who have contributed to financing this exciting project.

Carole Guinard

# NEWS

## 27/ TAKE UP YOUR AGENDAS

### GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Once again this year, the general assembly will give us the opportunity to meet. Come along everyone to review the projects realised in 2016, anticipate those of 2017 and hear the narrative of our trip to Israel and Palestine for our 10th anniversary.

It will take place on **Wednesday 16 November at 7 p.m** in Lausanne. You will be informed in good time of the place.

And as it's never too early, please take note of the next edition of the GRAND BAL DU PETIT NOUVEL AN in favour of Coexistences: **Friday 13 January 2017** at the Casino de Montbenon in Lausanne starting at 8 p.m.

Looking forward to seeing you on these occasions, the communication group and the work groups of the association wish you a luminous autumn.