



Oasis of Dreams: Teaching and Learning Peace in a Jewish Palestinian Village in Israel. Grace Feuerverger. New York: Routledge Falmer. 218 pp.

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The seemingly unending cycles of violence in the Middle East conflict have all but dashed any hope for the genuine building of a more lasting peace. However, like Anees Jung's *Olives from Jericho: Peace in Winter Gardens* (Paris: Unesco Publishing, 1999), this book plants another seed of hope. It is a case study of an experimental school in a small village not far from Jerusalem called Neve Shalom/Wahat Al-Salam, meaning in Hebrew and Arabic, Oasis of Peace. The community has been committed to peaceful coexistence, and in this study its primary and secondary schools have been placed under a microscope.

In each classroom there are an equal number of Jewish and Palestinian children who experience an integrated education, but who also are encouraged to develop their own distinct identities. Each learns her or his own language, history, and culture, but also the language, history, and culture of the other group. Every class has two team teachers, one Jewish and one Palestinian. This arrangement contrasts markedly with the physical separation of Jews and Arabs in Israeli public schools.

The author inquires into a number of intriguing questions: What perceptions of the world, and of the Middle East conflict, do the teachers respectively bring to the classroom? How do their perceptions interact with each other and with those of students in their classes? How do teachers and administrators image themselves and their identities as Jews and Arabs caught up in a very complex struggle? How are their views enacted in the construction of the school curriculum and expressed in classroom activities? How much do the schools in fact incorporate an egalitarian/bilingual/binational philosophy into their curricula?

To explore these questions, the author made a number of visits to the village over a period of nine years. She uses an ethnographic approach to her research, observing classes and school activities; interviewing students, teachers, administrators, and community members in depth; and keeping a journal of her observations and reflections. The reader learns about the school as a moral community; the difficult dilemmas confronting its members; the traumas they experience as they live through personal, community, and national crises; the personal narratives of selected participants who have founded and nurtured the school and community; and the ideas that have inspired a pedagogy of peace. The study is underpinned by theoretical concepts drawn from a variety of scholars. Chief among them are Lawrence Kohlberg's idea of the "just



community," Martin Buber's notion of "dialogical meeting" between self and others, John Dewey's idea of "experiential learning," Paulo Freire's concept of the "liberation of marginalized people," and Henry Giroux's notion of "border crossing."

I found this to be an extraordinarily rich text, describing not only the internal culture of a very unique school, but its intricate connections to the village, to the nation, and to the international setting. The author weaves into the writing her personal story, locating her own background, values, and assumptions. She shows remarkable even-handedness in selecting, describing, and understanding Jewish and Palestinian experience, and gives voice to the individuals who make up these groups. The book is eminently readable, providing a blending of story, interviews, journal quotes, descriptive text, theoretical considerations, and personal reflections. Photographs are added, especially in the earlier chapters to convey graphically the quality and spirit of school life.

I had only two concerns when I read this book. The first is that although the text has its own integrity, it does not draw upon the growing body of literature specifically on peace education. For example, the author does not reference concepts such as intrapersonal peace at the microlevel and its relationship to interpersonal and intergroup peace at the macrolevel, or the process of transformation of violent cultures into cultures of peace, which are dealt with in the peace education literature. My second concern is that the book appears to have been hurriedly and carelessly edited: many references and citations in the text itself are not included in the bibliography; in some places the bibliography is not in alphabetical order, or contains information that is at variance with what is contained in the text.

In sum, however, the book is a major contribution to our understanding of the way in which a school and its community can deal effectively with deep divisions, suffering, and hurt in the effort to build a just, rightful, and sustainable society. It conveys the extremely complex realities of Jewish-Palestinian relations and offers a spiritually uplifting perspective of multilingual and multicultural education. The author shows that these schools are really no longer an "experiment," but rather a demonstration of effective peace education and an exemplary model for schools and communities in similarly grave predicaments. Her concluding paragraph states "education has the power to create a collective 'home'-a vision of the future nurtured by the reflective narratives and stories of all the players involved" (p. 188). The educational quest in Israel is simultaneously a continuing external search for the Promised Land and a search for the dream, Canaan, the Divine within.

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