

MY VIEW: DOTTIE INDYKE

# Next generation can find way to peace in Israel

**T**he recent murders of Israeli and Palestinian teens are a tragic manifestation of the rage and prejudice that have simmered between these people for decades.

History is rife with examples of how it is easier to hate than to listen and more gratifying to react than reflect. Sadly, our world defines strength as aggression and domination, while qualities such as open-heartedness, compassion and flexibility are attributed to the "weak." And so the killing goes on and on, fueled by age-old grudges, religious zealotry, portrayals of the other as monsters and segregated societies that make impossible the development of genuine friendship and understanding. Detesting a caricature of a person is effortless; loathing a beloved friend is not.

For the past eight years, as director of Creativity for Peace, I have not only witnessed the transformation of hatred but also scores of instances of real-world peacemaking. Working with young women from this troubled part of the world has proven to me that the opportunity to express pain in front of the other side and the freedom to scratch below the surface to learn something of the other's heart can and will produce miracles.

When they begin with our

sides are shocked by what they learn of the others' lives.

The complexity of the situation into which Israelis and Palestinians are born presents them with excruciating contradictions. The elders of their society provide no good role models for how to live with this information. That these young women are willing to face these dichotomies head-on is, to me, a mark of great strength and courage.

Liat, a 23-year-old Israeli, recently wrote to me, "I love my kibbutz, my people and my country, but I hate being part of the Middle East. There are too many obsessed people calling killing 'justice' and choosing religion or nationality over humanity. The people I miss the most in these times are my Palestinian friends. They are my only proof that we can learn to love each other and that peace is possible."

Mandy, a 20-year-old Palestinian, shared her dismay hearing 8-year-olds chanting death slogans toward Israelis. "This is what they were taught to say," she told me. "Even before they know their story they wish them death. I once was like them. When I think about this I feel sad and angry. I feel regret. I'm glad that I've had the chance to fix this. I'm glad that I can call myself a peacemaker."

organization, Israelis are certain that all Palestinians are terrorists whose greatest wish is to kill them. Palestinians believe that all Israelis are soldiers whose main goal is to make their lives miserable. These perceptions are based in truth, but like all stereotypes, they crumble in the face of firsthand experience of the common bonds they share in language, culture, humor and dreams of a future of peace.

Seem simplistic? Actually, it's quite profound. Our Palestinian participants admit that before they had a place to express their pain, they considered becoming suicide bombers. Israelis' thoughts about the military take major turns. Both

peacemakers.

We can hope for peace between Israel and Palestine, but it is unlikely to come from the current leaders, so entrenched are they in the hurts and baggage of their history. The wisdom and reason, the forgiveness and the passion to create a safer and more just future for all, are with the next generation. These are the ones in whom I place my trust.

*Dottie Indyke is the executive director of Creativity for Peace, which trains young Palestinian and Israeli women to be leaders and peacemakers. Sixteen girls, ages 15 to 17, will begin their work for peace this summer in Santa Fe.*



**From left, Yuval Dadoash, Siwar Hamati, Yaara Tal and Majdal Ashmer during the Creativity for Peace camp last summer. COURTESY PHOTO**