Dear Friends,

As the summer draws to a close, our 2009-10 Vision Program fellows have just returned home after an incredible journey through the Balkans. After the intense summer component of the program, fellows are now energized to start reaching out to their communities. As for our high school students, we are just weeks from launching the 2009-10 San Francisco Bay Area Unity Programs, our fifth year running this groundbreaking inter-community course. We are now accepting applications — it’s time to apply now!

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2009-10 Unity Programs Now Accepting Applications

The launch of the 2009-10 Unity Program is just around the corner. We are very excited for classes to start in September and are now receiving applications from Muslim and Jewish high school students in the San Francisco Bay Area. This year — the fifth year of this incredible program — we are aiming to work with a total of 72 students across three partnerships in the San Francisco Bay Area: the Peninsula/South Bay, the East Bay, and San Francisco.

Apply online now!

2009-10 Vision Program Fellows Return from Balkans

The 2009-2010 Vision Program fellows have returned home from the Balkans after completing the summer component of this ten-month program. The fellows have begun transitioning back into their daily lives, re-entering their home communities with memories of the trip and ways to share what they have learned with their communities. As they prepare to return to school, they are also beginning to look toward the next stage of the fellowship: giving presentations on their campus and in their home community. They will give two presentations before the fall conference and another two in winter and spring.

To follow the students’ journeys, check out the Vision Program weblog where you can find pictures and written reflections from the program. We have included a few samples below in our Students Speak feature.

Meet the 2009-10 Unity Program Co-Educators


AV is happy and proud to introduce the newest members of the Unity Program team: Nicole Sorger, Mabruka Abudra, Oren Kroll-Zeldin, and Suzy Abu-nie. These four Co-Educators bring an incredible wealth of knowledge and experience to the Unity Program. To read more about these amazing educators, and the rest of the Abraham’s Vision staff, click here.

2008-09 Unity Program Graduation Speeches Online

On May 31st, 2009 Unity Program participants gathered together for our first ever graduation ceremony. Aside from the powerful keynote speech, the students’ commencement speeches made the occasion incredibly inspiring and memorable. You can now view or read the speeches online.

In Other News... Presentations and Workshops

August 8: As part of a two-day “Workshop for Peace Education” run by the renowned Jerusalem-based Israel/Palestine Center for Research and Information (IPCRI), AV Co-Executive Director Huda Abu Arqoub led a session entitled “Israeli Palestinian Encounter Program Challenges: New Approaches Rooted in Conflict Transformation Theories.” Thirty people attended the workshop, where Abu Arqoub spoke about some of the creative ways AV has approached challenges found in the field of inter-group educational programs.

August 11: Later the same week, Abu Arqoub spoke at the third annual Global Majority’s “Promoting Peace Through Dialogue” conference in Jerusalem, where she led a workshop discussing the facilitation model that AV utilizes.

In Students Speak, we highlight the transformations taking place in our students’ lives using our students’ own words. To view additional student reflections, visit our website at www.abrahamsvision.org or
THE VISSION PROGRAM

"Back home I found myself at the top of a 360 degree cliff, admiring the sea. I decided to watch the sunrise at the top of the cliff and I had to wake up early. Not everyone agreed with me. Some even said I was crazy. But I didn't care. I went alone to the top of the cliff and watched the sunrise. It was one of the most beautiful moments of my life. I felt like I was touching the sky. The feeling was so intense that I started crying. I knew I had to share this moment with everyone. I went back to the camp and told everyone about my experience. They were all amazed. They said it was the most beautiful moment of their life. I felt like I had found my purpose. I knew I had to work for peace."

- To read the entirety of the joint submission by Nura Salaymeh (Oranim College) click here.

"The last two days of our trip were full. On Friday... we woke up and worked on end-of-trip evaluations. Huda led us in an activity to review our past experiences. During lunch I slipped away from the group and wandered around Mostar for one of the last times by myself..."

- To read the entirety of the joint submission by Penina Eilberg Schwartz (Oberlin College) click here.

THE UNITY PROGRAM

"When I started Abraham's Vision there were many fears floating in my head. I started questioning whether or not we would get along, how us Jews would react to a different culture, and if we would ever touch intimate topics..."

- To read the entirety of the submission by Sara Geliebter (Berkeley Midrasha) click here.

"What changed me were the hours upon hours listening to the stories of the Jewish students. Their stories shocked me not by their extremity, but just how similar to my own. I remember one specific conversation amongst the Jewish students where they were discussing their faith's sense of modesty. I remember thinking that you could take that exact conversation and drop it into a gathering of Muslims..."

- To read the entirety of the submission by Faisal Hamid (Muslim American Society / Muslim Community Association) click here.

HOW ARE WE DIFFERENT?

Abraham's Vision is a conflict transformation organization that explores group and individual identities through experiential and political education. Examining social relations within and between the Jewish, Muslim, Israeli, and Palestinian communities, we empower participants to practice just alternatives to the status quo.

We are a 501(c)(3) non-profit conflict transformation organization, dedicated to creating a new generation of leaders empowered and committed to improving our world. Our distinct vision is based on the following principles:

- Equal Partnerships: We are committed to equal partnerships across ethnic, religious, and gender lines. This commitment is reflected in our organizational structure as well as our long-term programs, workshops, and presentations.
- Experiential Learning: We are committed to creative forms of education that both recognize the importance of content-based teaching and value individual and group participant experiences.
- Encounters: We approach inter-group encounters as a reflection of the political realities in which we live, utilizing them as a central element of our educational approach.
- Political Education: We focus on individual and collective relationships within current political realities, placing the relationship between individuals and groups at the center of the educational experience rather than analyzing political developments as something separate from students.