

## Power, Peace Making, and Good Food.

A thank you letter from I Wage Peace.

At 4:30 p.m. Wednesday evening we lost power at my house. Muhammad said “the oven is not on.” He, Maya, and Suli had spent the entire afternoon cooking a Mediterranean feast for our fundraiser. “Why spend hundreds of dollars on a caterer, when we can cook and they will taste something they never could have anywhere in the world but in Palestine and Israel?” We purchased \$132 of tomatoes, parsley, bulgur wheat, rice, two chickens, eggplant, onions, garlic, yogurt, potatoes, carrots, lettuce, oil, cauliflower, cucumber, squash, and tahini and away they cooked.



Combatants for Peace builds relationships by sharing meals and personal stories of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. Sulaiman, as a 14 year old living in the West Bank, became entrenched in violent responses to the occupation. “At 14, you don’t think things through,” he explained. “I was angry at what I saw and experienced with the occupation and I wanted revenge.” From rock throwing to Molotov cocktails, he attacked Israeli soldiers with knives in an attempt to capture their weapons. As a political prisoner, he learned the art of non-violent action, his last hunger strike lasting two weeks. He found these coordinated non-violent actions improved prison conditions. He studied Hebrew, English, world history, and Gandhi, Dr. King, and Nelson Mandela. When he left prison, he was morally committed to nonviolence and one of a handful of Palestinians who reached out to meet Israeli soldiers and founded Combatants for Peace. “It is obvious to anyone who wants to see it that there is no military solution to this problem, not for the Israelis and not for the Palestinians.”



Maya grew up in a kibbutz near the Galilee. She grew up a liberal who believed in a two state solution, but she had never met a Palestinian and rarely questioned the policies of the occupation. She served in the Israeli military and protected her people. She met her first Palestinian while attending an olive harvest in the West Bank with Combatants for Peace. “He was a nice gentleman, he introduced himself, and then he told me he distributed ice-cream in Jerusalem and I was so disturbed at meeting him that I had to get out of there; so I went to the bus and stayed in my seat for the rest of the event.” She later attended another olive harvest and was shocked when settlers attacked them, brutally beating one of their members. “It felt strange,” she recalled, “finding that the Israeli forces were not defending me, but were on the other side, throwing tear gas at us. We were peacefully harvesting olives, nothing more.” Last year Maya was the organizer of the alternative Memorial Day ceremony in Tel Aviv, a Combatants For Peace event open to the public and attended by five-thousand Arabs and Israelis gathering to remember the fallen from both sides of the conflict.

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At my home, far away from the violence, we prepared our small fund raiser for the Combatants for Peace. They, who bring Israelis to harvest olives with Palestinian farmers, they who bring Palestinians to meet Israelis without bringing their guns or searching them at check points, they who create peaceful protests against home demolitions and road blocks, they who use giant puppets and theatre in front of armed combatants, and they who change the dynamics of the conversation by bringing people to see and hear and act in creative ways beneficial to both sides: "It is not a zero sum game," says Sulaiman Khatib.

At 5:40 p.m., my wonderful wife Therese and I put out some candles and the power was restored. At 5:45 the first guests arrived. We served small glasses of freshly brewed beer and cider courtesy of our renowned brewmaster Jeff Browning and our guests watched a 7 min film about the Combatants for Peace. Moving upstairs, we enjoyed conversation and a seven course home cooked Middle Eastern buffet. The food was extraordinary, over forty people were fed, we have pledged or received gifts of \$14,170, and we grew a little bit closer to one another.

Thank you for supporting this wonderful event. Thank you for changing the conversation and sharing your wealth, your hope, and your friendship with our friends, the peacemakers, Combatants for Peace.

Bruce



Combatants for Peace  
Sulaiman Khatib, Maya Katz and Mohammed Owedah