



2018: A YEAR OF AMPLIFYING ARAB VOICES AND CELEBRATING IDENTITY



Photo Credit: Sadeel Media

GREAT MARCH OF RETURN

Olympia solidarity with Gaza

The Great March of Return, the nonviolent Palestinian rallies that began on March 30 to coincide with Land Day and culminated on May 15 (al-Nakba), still continues at the Israeli military border fence along the Gaza Strip. According to the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights, since the start of the protests, 176 Palestinians have been killed in the demonstrations. Close to 10,000 others have been injured, including approximately 1,773 children, 281 women, 152 paramedics, and 129 journalists. (These numbers reflect those wounded by live bullets and/or directly hit with tear canisters. Other sources place the wounded at much higher numbers.)

RCF has watched the protests unfold from Olympia and held weekly vigils during the March 30-May 15 period in solidarity with our friends in Gaza. We condemn the abhorrent violations of international humanitarian law and stand in solidarity with our Palestinian colleagues demanding justice.

PALESTINIAN CULTURAL PALACE

The bombing of the Said Al-Mishal Cultural Center

On Thursday, August 9, 2018, the Israeli military carried out a missile attack that completely destroyed the Said Al-Mishal Cultural Center, one of few large venues in Gaza for cultural events such as theater and musical performances. The center, located in the densely populated Gaza City, was a hub for activity, community building, and inspiring creative expression for Gazans living under occupation. The center is also where the Palestinian Cultural Palace practiced and performed their shows directed by Mohammed Baroud. While the program organizers and participants were all physically safe, they have lost all of their decorations, costumes, and supplies, a material loss worth thousands of dollars.

As with our other Gaza Projects, RCF is committed to ensuring the Palestinian Cultural Palace Youth Performance Program continues because we firmly believe that Palestinian youth should have the opportunity to explore their cultural identity, express themselves through creative outlets, and develop their social and emotional skills in a healthy and encouraging environment.



Photo Credit: Kata Gomeztagle-Johann

A WORD FROM WHITNEY

by Whitney Faulkner, RCF Executive Director

This October I was privileged to visit Palestine for the first time. I traveled with Eyewitness Palestine (formerly Interfaith Peace-Builders) on their 66th delegation to Palestine/Israel as part of the Environmental Justice and Olive Harvest Delegation. The purpose of the delegation was to focus on the Palestinian harvest season and its deep cultural significance and to explore how Palestinian access to land and water is limited through illegal Israeli settlement infrastructure and Israeli military policy. We met with Palestinian groups and communities that continue to organize and resist occupation and working for peace with justice.

Each day we met with people like Omar Barghouti, co-founder of the BDS (Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions) movement, the Tamimi family, and with organizers who are resisting the occupation through farming and maintaining Palestinian culture and heritage through the art of agriculture. These meetings helped us gain a broader understanding of the impact of Settler Colonialism on land and people, and the beautiful acts of resistance that take place each day. While I was eager to visit a place that I care deeply about, I also needed to acknowledge the privilege I hold with ability to visit Palestine with little or no issue, while the estimated 6 million Palestinians living in the diaspora are largely unable to go home, and Palestinians living within occupied Palestine do not have the same freedom of movement that I experienced.

One day we met with the group Youth Against Settlements in Al Khalil (Hebron), learning the history of the area and how the occupation is impacting the daily life of Palestinians, and how Youth Against Settlements continues to resist through nonviolent direct action, media attention, and advocacy work. We visited the Ibrahimi Masjid (Mosque) where we, unlike our guide, were able to walk through the security gate without lifting our shirts and unbuttoning our pants to show the Israeli Occupational Forces (IOF) that we had nothing threatening on us. As the visit concluded we reached Shuhada Street, which has been closed to Palestinians for over 16 years. After saying goodbye and thanking our guide for sharing his knowledge and experience with us, we walked down Shuhada alone, the empty, quiet street a visceral reminder that, as visitors, we have more rights than the Palestinians who live in Al Khalil or are from here.



Photo Credit: Eyewitness Palestine

Towards the end of the trip, we visited Aida Camp and Deheisheh Camp, both located in Bethlehem. Deheisheh, established in 1949, is one square mile and home to about 15,000 Palestinians from approximately 45 different villages. Our guide, Murad, walked us through both camps explaining the history. Hearing about his experiences and witnessing the consistent dehumanizing treatment of Palestinians by the IOF and settlers forced me to reflect on my privilege and role in creating change.

This experience further solidified the need for organizations like the Rachel Corrie Foundation to use our resources and capacity to amplify Palestinian voices and acknowledge the challenges Palestinians face in speaking openly and freely about the occupation. In doing the work at home, we must remain focused on cross-movement building, education, and legislative work that is rooted in the belief that everyone, from the U.S to Palestine, deserves to live a dignified existence with fully realized human rights. I hope you'll join me, and join RCF, in using our collective power and privilege to bring an end to the occupation and to realize a just future for all.

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-Whitney Faulkner, RCF Executive Director

REFLECTING ON 15 YEARS

by Cindy and Craig Corrie, RCF founders and parents of Rachel Corrie

The Pacific Northwest, where we live, is known for its mountains, water and lovely moderate climate, and also for doleful, gray days in winter, and rain. But our local weather expert reported that we've had one of the sunniest Novembers recorded. We've all noticed, and have relished every sparkling moment. It's a reminder of the power of light, and where we go to find it when there is so much darkness.

For us and the Rachel Corrie Foundation, light comes through all of you – from messages you send, actions you take, emails you open, gifts you make. Our advocacy for Palestinian rights, the educational events we host, the grassroots-led projects we support in Gaza and the scholarships for young women in the West Bank – none of this happens without you. We can't say it often enough.

This has been a significant year, the 15th anniversary of the Rachel Corrie Foundation. We've looked back to 2003 when Rachel introduced us to the movement to end the Israeli occupation, and we've revisited the fifteen years of growth that have led to a movement for Palestinian rights – and an even broader one connecting all the oppressions, and prioritizing universal human rights.

We struggle with the pain and loss in Gaza but have been inspired by the courage and determination of those who have taken their demands for life and freedom to the buffer zone in the Great March of Return. We've been ashamed by the actions of our own government toward Palestine but heartened by the numbers of people throughout the U.S. who better understand the injustice. There are twinges of sadness as our generation passes the baton to a younger one, but we are thrilled by the intelligent, articulate, and unrelenting voices that have emerged among young Palestinians, black, Latino, and indigenous Americans who are finally being listened to and see connections between their experiences. We appreciate the hard work required as we learn to be in solidarity with them all.

The two of us are blessed with opportunities to connect with extraordinary people throughout the world. At a conference on Palestine in Lebanon early this year, we met a sheikh and his wife, teachers from Aleppo in Syria. They had little English, and we little Arabic, but with translation, we learned that a "sheikh" can refer to a family, religious, or community leader. When we asked which role this sheikh played, our new friend tipped his head and said modestly, "I guess all three." We learned that the couple's children were back in Aleppo, that their home had been bombed earlier, but all had survived. Friends abroad had urged the family to leave for safety in Germany, but they had remained. It was another example of *sumud* (steadfastness) which we have learned from our Palestinian friends.



Photo Credit: Chris McGuire Photography

When we asked if the sheikh had hope for Syria, he replied, "We could not be at this conference devoted to Palestine without hope for Syria." He shared that Rachel's story had impacted him as a Muslim and teacher. She had come from a different religious background, but he trusted that her deeds would take her to paradise, so he now taught about a broader path to that place. We think he was talking about a path for those who bring light to the world and a bit of heaven on earth to others.

The Rachel Corrie Foundation for Peace and Justice was founded to somehow sustain Rachel's spirit, her vision for the world in which she wanted to live, and her light. It exists only because of your commitment and generosity. As we ask once again for your support of the Rachel Corrie Foundation, we thank you for the interest, care, encouragement, and light you bring to this work every day and every year, and we send wishes for a bright and productive 2019 for us all and for Palestine.

In peace,
Cindy and Craig Corrie

TOURNAMENT FOR ATHLETES WITH DISABILITIES

2018 marks the 5th year of the Rachel Corrie Tournament for Athletes with Disabilities, part of the Rachel Corrie Gaza Sport Initiative. We spoke with Eid Shaqura, local organizer and Director of Al Basma Club for Disabled and Board member on the Palestine Paralympic Committee, to ask him a few questions about himself, this year's tournament and the disabled community in Gaza.

INTERVIEW WITH EID SHAQURA



Why do you, personally, continue to stay involved? What is something about this project you are most proud of?

I have been involved in the Paralympic sports circle and movement for persons with disabilities since 1998 when I was a university student. I also entered the community of persons with disabilities when I was a child because my uncle was on the first wheelchair basketball national team in 1994.

I am proud of all elements related to the Rachel Corrie Tournament. I am very happy when looking at the active participation of the different athletes. Since June, athletes began calling me, asking about the tournament, the place, the sports, and others. At the moment, the Rachel Corrie Tournament has been stamped in the mind of the athletes with disabilities mainly because of the best performance of the tournament from A to Z.

This is the first year there will be a Technical Training Course associated with the Tournament. Why did organizers feel this was important to add?

Based on a needs assessment done in early 2018, we noticed that there has been a lack of well qualified technical staff for various sports. In addition, we noticed that even university graduates of physical fitness don't have enough information about how persons with disabilities engage in these sports. So we needed an opportunity for university graduates to get involved and be trained in this kind of way.

How have you seen the Great March of Return impact the work you do with the Tournament for Athletes with Disabilities?

As a result of the Great March of Return, the number of persons with disabilities has notably increased. This created a new challenge to attract these newly injured people to join our tournament. But most of them were under medical rehabilitation. We made some initial contact to invite them to see the tournament in action this year. We hope to see many of them as participants in future tournaments.

What challenges do you see the disabled community in Gaza facing in the coming year?

The Gaza Strip is in an unstable situation. We have been living under siege for 12 years and the disabled community depends heavily on NGOs. Unfortunately, they cannot meet all the needs of the persons with disabilities, and there has been no support from the government. Every sector of the rehabilitation process lacks a lot. When returning to sport, there has been no stable funding to create a complementary sport program for the disabled people, including administrative and technical staff. We also lack tools and other important things such as playgrounds and sport halls.



Photo Credit: Al Basma Club for the Disabled

The Tournament for Athletes with Disabilities ran from December 3, International Day for Disabled Persons, to December 10, at the Red Crescent Society Sport Hall in Khan Younis City, Gaza. New features included highlighting newly injured children between the ages of 7 and 14 in Opening Day Recreational Sport, hosting Football for Amputees, and providing a Technical Training course for 80 volunteers to gain practical experience in implementing sports for persons with disabilities. Approximately 400 disabled athletes were served, including 87 women.

BIRZEIT UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S SCHOLARSHIP

The partnership between RCF and Birzeit University continues to strengthen in its 4th year. Lamis Aburamah, the first scholarship recipient, has successfully graduated with a degree in Journalism, and RCF has expanded the impact of the scholarship program by awarding two 2018/2019 academic year scholarships. Read more from our recipients below!

FROM LAMIS:

I would like to extend my thanks, with all pride and gratitude, to everyone at Rachel Corrie Foundation for Peace and Justice for what you have given me through my years of education at Birzeit University; my dream school. This wouldn't have been real without your support during my educational career. Without you, I wouldn't have been able to achieve my dream and study the specialty that I love, Journalism and Media.

I appreciate all the efforts that you've made to support my educational career, and I'm grateful to have received the Rachel Corrie Foundation scholarship. Today I am pleased to thank you for the wonderful efforts that helped me complete my studies. Thank you for your dedication, loyalty, and hard work.

My family and I are very grateful to you for being like a second family to me, for this scholarship has helped me tremendously in finishing my studies and becoming not only a Birzeit University graduate but also a journalist, dreams that I have always wanted to come true. This would not have happened if you had not made every effort towards making it real, with sincerity and purity of hearts and the nobility of the staff of the Rachel Corrie Foundation and their unceasing dedication, and their keenness on progress and development.

I hope that you will continue to offer scholarships and assistance to Palestinian students who are not financially able to complete their studies and enroll in universities with a distinguished name, such as Birzeit University. Due to the constant increase in the living cost, the high rate of unemployment, and low standard of living amongst Palestinian families, many Palestinian students are deprived of studying and following their dreams of becoming university degree holders. I hope in the future I can be similar to the Rachel Corrie Foundation, supporting other students in their educational careers, because through your institution I have learned the meaning of unconditioned giving.

I graduated from university and aspire to be a journalist who is able to deliver the truth about the Palestinian cause and show the daily suffering and pain we are living in. I hope you will consider me part of your institution, because you have become a part of my life and my successful path in achieving my dreams. I know very well that a prestigious institution such as the Rachel Corrie Foundation does not wait for praise or thanks, but we must give thanks and praise to those who deserve, for people like you hats are raised. I hope that the Rachel Corrie Foundation is an example followed by everyone, to follow your footpath in work and achievements and carry a great legacy to the fullest.

With my highest respect and appreciation,
Lamis Aburamah

BISSAN, 2018-2019 RECIPIENT

Bissan considers Birzeit University to be different from any other institution in Palestine, as it gives students the key to develop and grow. She studies Finance and feels that she can excel in this area and prove herself in a way that benefits her society and country as a whole.

"I am in awe and very thankful for the amazing people who care about helping students continue their education. No words can do you justice." - Bissan



Photo Credit: Birzeit University

HANAN, 2018-2019 RECIPIENT

Hanan is an architecture student who views Birzeit University as the pathway to succeed in all aspects of life, whether educational, social or economic. She believes that education is the most important tool in the life of every Palestinian, and the only means to achieve her goals and dreams.

"This scholarship allowed me to stay in university; without it, I wouldn't have been able to continue my education. I am so thankful for your help, and I promise I'll make it count." - Hanan



Photo Credit: Birzeit University

FAREWELL FROM FARIHAN BUSHNAQ

After 9 years of board membership, Farihan Bushnaq is bidding RCF adieu. We will miss her greatly and appreciate her immeasurable contributions to RCF and the community.

"It was initially overwhelming for me to even contemplate serving on the board, having not mastered the nuance of the English language, and lacking the necessary experience. However, the cause was greater than me or my doubts, I felt compelled, driven, especially as a Palestinian American, to use the talent and knowledge that I possess to help advance the goals and mission of Rachel Corrie Foundation for Justice and Peace, for I totally embrace these goals and felt an inherent duty to serve. Along the way, I had the honor to meet and established lasting camaraderie with the most delightful, selfless, dedicated, and talented people that I have ever encountered. My life has been enriched by that experience."



Photo Credit: Miguel Pineda

If you are local to the Olympia area and are interested in potential board membership, we would love to hear from you! Please email board@rachelcorriefoundation.org to learn more.

2018: PALESTINE IN OLYMPIA

Making local connections to Palestine and the Middle East is a major component of the work we do throughout the year. Check out some of the highlights!

JANUARY

Women+s March Olympia: We provided opportunities for marchers to contact their congressional representative regarding HR 4391, Rep. McCollum's bill to end funding for military detention of Palestinian children.

MARCH

ISM founder and activist Huwaida Arraf spoke in Olympia and Seattle for the 15-year memorial observances of Rachel's last stand.

MAY

RCF commemorated the 70th anniversary of al-Nakba at the WA State Capitol with a placard display of villages destroyed in 1948, followed by an Honor Walk to remember those killed and injured in the Great March of Return, and a film screening of 1948: Creation & Catastrophe.

JULY

RCF produced a Middle Eastern Fashion Show under the direction of Chema Jamel Oh, a Tunisian native, former Nordstrom designer, and active community member.

SEPTEMBER

RCF hosted Peace Works 2018: A Middle Eastern Film Festival in partnership with the Olympia Film Society, showcasing the films *The Prophet*, *Persepolis*, and newly-released documentary, *Naila and the Uprising*, about the Second Intifada.

NOVEMBER

RCF hosted Dr. Yasser Abu Jamei, head of the Gaza Community Mental Health Programme, in Olympia for his talk about psychological health in Gaza.

FEBRUARY

Internationally-syndicated columnist and author Ramzy Baroud came to Olympia to talk about his latest book, *The Last Earth: A Palestinian Story*.

APRIL

RCF featured Palestine 100, a Vancouver-based portrait project, as our artist for Spring Arts Walk. The portrait project will capture 100 profiles of Palestinians living in the diaspora.

JUNE

RCF hosted the Goals for Gaza Olympia Ramadan Soccer Tournament, raising over \$3,000 for the Rachel Corrie Gaza Sport Initiative, and co-hosted a Ramadan Iftar Meal at the Masjid al-Nur, Islamic Center of Olympia.

AUGUST

RCF sponsored A Day in the Life of Yemen: A Luke Somers' Photography Exhibit at the Capitol Theater (through the month of September).

OCTOBER

RCF hosted the biennial Shuruq IV: Olympia Arab Festival during Olympia Fall Arts Walk, and hosted Norwegian physician, humanitarian, and activist Dr. Mads Gilbert in Seattle to raise funds for RCF Gaza Projects.

DECEMBER

RCF hosted our 6th annual Human Rights Day Celebration & Fundraiser, with Attorney Steffani Powell focusing on the immigration and humanitarian crisis at the U.S.-Mexico border and the parallels to Palestine.



Photo Credit: Luke Somers

SHURUQ IV: OLYMPIA ARAB FESTIVAL

AMPLIFYING ARAB VOICES

On October 6th, there was a buzz to the normal Olympia Arts Walk energy. The sun was shining; community members were out with smiles; and wafting from the Olympia Center was the scent of delicious falafel, Arabic coffee, and treats. The Fourth Olympia Arab Festival was under way! This year, the Arab Festival benefited from many new partnerships, including a sponsorship by Olympia Copy & Printing, theatrical performances by the Olympia Family Theater, and food by Main Street Gyros from Seattle. The 2018 festival also featured new young Arab performers and activists, such as Essam Mohammed, ZAG, and Samia Saliba (former RCF intern and WWU activist). This program was supported, in part, by grant funding from the Washington State Arts Commission, National Endowment for the Arts, and the Community Foundation of South Puget Sound. For pictures and the complete program, visit rachelcorriefoundation.org.

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF YEMEN

A LUKE SOMERS PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBIT

RCF had the distinct privilege of hosting A Day in the Life of Yemen: A Luke Somers Photography Exhibit this fall at the Capitol Theater in partnership with the Olympia Film Society, with additional exhibitions at Peace Works and the Olympia Arab Festival that included his family members. Luke Somers, an American freelance photographic journalist and resident of Yemen, was killed in a failed raid attempt in Dec. 2014, a year and 3 months after his abduction by armed tribesman. The exhibit offered a lens through Luke's - and, in turn, our - eyes to the hospitality, generosity, beauty and sheer authenticity of the people of Yemen. In doing so, we aimed to bridge the wide gap in understanding that defines our "us-and-them" mentality, as well as to provide a glimpse into a day in the life of a Yemeni citizen.

SPECIAL THANKS TO PAULA & JORDAN SOMERS FOR MAKING THE EXHIBIT POSSIBLE!



Photo Credit: Miguel Pineda

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