



The Association for Trauma Outreach & Prevention (ATOP)

www.meaningfulworld.com

NY Office

185 E. 85th Street, New York, NY 10028

Phone: 1 (201) 941- 2266

E-mail: drkalayjian@meaningfulworld.com

ATOP MEANINGFULWORLD MIDDLE EAST TRAUMA RELIEF MISSION TARGETS REFUGEES AND SERVICE PROVIDERS

Workshops, trainings, healing, empowering and educating for continued psychosocial, physical, ecological and spiritual recovery in Palestine, Jordan and with Syrian Refugees

Susan Smith and Dr. Ani Kalayjian

Imagine you are forced to leave your home in the middle of the night with nothing but your pajamas, witnessing people being shot to death in front of you, while hearing loud bombing and shelling at your neighbor's home, not knowing where to go? How to save your life and protect your children and family? Imagine not having anything to eat or drink, and not being able to shut the hunger cries of your child? This is only a small picture of what is happening in Syria. ATOP Meaningfulworld, continuing its humanitarian outreach in the Middle East embarked in a Humanitarian Mission in May 2014, to transform and help heal some of these emotional wounds. Although our direct outreach was to 500 individuals, our indirect outreach estimated at 30,000. The focus of this “**Empowerment for Peace Building**” mission was to observe, learn, educate, conduct research, share, transform and heal the wounds of direct, collective, vicarious and intergenerational trauma.



ATOP Meaningfulworld's Team comprised of Dr. Ani Kalayjian, Susan Smith, and her daughter Dareen Qaddoumi. In Jordan we were joined by Kathy Hansen and her son, Kier Hansen. We first began working in Palestine, as the continued trauma has had a severe scars and

reactions in the community, especially with the youth. We delivered workshops and trainings to Palestinian refugees and mental health, education, and community-based service providers in the West Bank's Aida Refugee Camp in Bethlehem, Al-Faraa Refugee Camp in Nablus, the Palestine Union of Social Workers and Psychologists in Al-Khalil (Hebron), and as well as to professionals at Bayt Sahour YMCA. Participants ubiquitously spoke of ongoing suffering, hardship, loss and trauma as a result of the 65-year Israeli brutal military occupation, and the hardships and difficulties of being land-locked and strangled by a 450 mile concrete barrier erected by Israel and condemned by United Nations General Assembly resolutions and the International Court of Justice in The Hague. Denied the ability to travel to the land of their birth, visit relatives, seek medical assistance or visit holy sites in Jerusalem. Palestinians have suffered and endured inhumane military domination in wholesale violation of the International Declaration of Human Rights for four generations. Workshop and training participants resounded with a clarion call to end the Israel occupation and the resultant collective, horizontal and individual chronic trauma they face daily.

ATOP Meaningfulworld started with a full-day of training programs in Bethlehem, Palestine at Aida Refugee Camp's Lajee Center. Aida Camp was established in 1950 predominantly by refugees from Jerusalem, and currently has a population 9,700. Dr. Kalayjian conducted two workshops, one with youth and the other with women who have experienced trauma of unjust imprisonment of their family members in Israeli prisons. She assessed mild to moderately severe trauma and PTSD symptoms. Adolescents expressed concerns about grades, economic hardship and the dearth of opportunities and daily stress of living with the Israeli-erected wall, and having to spend hours daily at checkpoints.

That day, Dr. Kalayjian worked single handedly as two members of the team had been detained for eight hours without cause by Israeli security forces at Ben Gurion International Airport in Tel Aviv. The two Americans were interrogated repeatedly regarding the purpose of their trip and pried for the list of individuals and organizations they would be meeting. Israeli security went into their cell phone directories, email and Facebook accounts before releasing them.

That evening our team regrouped and proceeded to Ramallah via the road and checkpoints for those without Israeli citizenship or in the company of an Israeli citizen. The trip from Bethlehem, which takes 30 minutes via the road reserved for Israelis, took more than two hours. Upon entering Ramallah city limits, an Israeli government sign warned Israeli citizens that it is against the law to enter the city, which it described as "dangerous to your lives."



At Al-Faraa Camp, the team worked with youth on empowerment, respect, ecology

After a restful sleep in the hilly and breezy city of Ramallah, we continued to Al-Faraa Refugee Camp, population 8,000, established in Nablus in 1950 by an influx of refugees

originating primarily from the Haifa region of what is now Israel. There the team has the unique opportunity to introduce the 7-Step Integrative Healing Model to 20 male students ages 14-27. At first, the males were reluctant to discuss their emotional issues and when asked to fill out the Harvard Trauma Questionnaire, many gave the knee-jerk response, "I have no problem, no trauma." However, when encouraged over the course of the workshop participants began to open up and disclose pervasive challenges emerged regarding anger and resentment at the Israeli occupation, the wall, and the checkpoints. This unresolved trauma can and has manifested into *Horizontal Violence*, which occurs when oppression for many years results in a power imbalance whereby the negative response is directed at one's community, family and self.

Dr. Kalayjian faced some resistance in discussing forgiveness as an intrinsic part of the healing process and said, "The vicious cycle of violence continues unless replaced with positive thoughts, behaviors and emotions. War will not regain Palestine; killing will not secure peace, which is a short term reaction, and not a solution. We must come up with positive ways to deal with the frustration. Buddha said, 'while killing a monster, don't become that monster.' In thwarting the cycle of violence in which the oppressed becomes the oppressor, whether through war, *internecine violence*, *domestic violence*, *Horizontal Violence*, *familial dysfunction* or *self-destruction behaviors*, she urged workshop attendees to transform themselves and limit the transmission of intergenerational trauma. She encouraged young people to use alternative, proactive and positive means to express themselves such as galvanize and gain global support and personal relief through Social Media. She encouraged every group to take an "Oath for Peace," and every group without exception applauded intuitively after taking the oath. The Oath stated: "Peace Begins with Me, and War and All Negative Thoughts End with Me."

Following the training, our team toured Al-Faraa' Prison, which dates back to the British Mandate and was used by the Israelis to illegally incarcerate 12 Palestinians in cells designed for one. The prison serves as a memorial living testimony to dehumanizing apartheid state. We were invited by Ayad Jaayseh, the Headmaster of Al-Faraa Boys School, to his home and visited his luscious garden painstakingly cared for and planted with at least one variety of fig, pomegranate, apricot, pear, apple, almond, currant and other fruit trees, as well as an array of herbs including sage, rosemary and thyme. Upon conclusion of our stay he wrote, "I am happy to communicate that your visit has made a significant impact on us, and the spirit of love and affection remains with us. I hope to continue this communication and I will be very happy to see you again on the land of Palestine. Please accept my respect and appreciation."



Working with Professionals on diaphragmatic breathing, mindfulness, energetic balancing, & grounding

The next day, our team travelled the sublimely beautiful rolling hills and valleys of the Holy Land, where most of the Prophets of the Torah, Bible and Qur'an walked and taught the Message of God, to Al Khalil (Hebron) in southern Palestine, named after the Prophet Abraham. The team had the honor of providing training to a group of Palestinian mental health professionals at the Union of Psychologists and Social Workers, led by its Director, Abdallah Al-Najjar. We discussed the 7-Step Integrative Healing Model as a means to promote, vicarious and secondary trauma experienced by professional workers, phases of learning, disarming oneself from within, breathing from the diaphragm and the steps of conflict transformation. The group also explored post disaster stages of coping including shock and disbelief, denial, strong emotional responses, acceptance of what we can and cannot change, and post trauma recovery bringing new skills and growth.

Dr. Kalayjian challenged the mental health practitioners to identify conflicts and challenges within their own society, to which the response was that Palestinian society was essentially conflict free with the exception of the Israeli occupation. In the discussion that followed, the group examined issues of domestic violence, gender inequality, and political discrimination between the Fateh and Hamas parties. She encouraged training attendees to realize the need for Fateh and Hamas to show solidarity with each other, and visualize the state of Palestine as a bird in which each party and each gender is the wing of a bird flying with balance and equality. "Unity and peace must first come from within," she emphasized. Palestinian solidarity, peace and cooperation are a prerequisite to optimal, integrated meaningful engagement with the occupying power. She applauded Fateh and Hamas's recent alliance as a preliminary first step with a view towards creating internal equity and equality between the people of the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem.

The next day, after another restful sleep in the Eye of the Wind area of Ramallah, thanks to our host Amal and Ahmed Abu Sif, our team travelled to Bayt Sahour to provide training to Palestinian social workers. Nearby in Bethlehem, illegal Israeli settlers had been accelerating their violent civil rights abuses, and the oppressive affects have spilled into surrounding regions, causing a general state of hyper vigilance. That same morning Jewish settlers had cut 250 olive trees belonging to Palestinians. Social workers and mental health practitioners from the YMCA, Bethlehem Municipal Government, Shoruk Center for the Blind, The Palestine Cancer Center, Catholic Charities, Dheisheh Refugee Camp, and other agencies were eager to participate in the trauma relief training and had much to share and process. To help them deal personally and professionally with ongoing, renewed, vicarious and directly experienced trauma, Dr. Kalayjian gave voice to the group as they shared their challenges. These included: horizontal violence exacerbated by the occupation resulting in domestic violence, in addition to unemployment issues, overcrowding, and the inability to renovate homes due to Israeli laws, along with expensive higher education and high taxes. The issue of domestic violence surfaced and male mental health professionals were given the challenge to pledge their commitment to start men's educational focus groups to teach respect, love, and admiration to women and men equally.



At the Al-Hussein Bin Talal University (AHU) in Ma'an, Jordan

That afternoon, ATOP Meaningfulworld departed Palestine across the Shaykh Hussein Bridge to Irbid, Jordan, and reflected on the long and intense days spent with a population suffering intergenerationally from a brutal military occupation for 65 years. Negative symptoms and challenges faced by the Palestinians include repressed anger and frustration regarding the apartheid and the Wall built by the Israelis to imprison the Palestinians, hyper-vigilance, emotional and responsive stagnation with few outlets, and many signs of horizontal violence such as domestic violence and ecological neglect. Strengths observed include: positive attitude, sense of humor, connection with God and faith, social support, and attempt to accept things that they cannot control. Participants were extremely receptive to the energetic release exercises, affirmations, and Emotional Intelligence (EQ). Recommendations shared: deep breathing, chakra balancing and use of essential oils to create and sustain peace within; creating a men's group in order to develop and sustain healthier families; planting herbs and creating peace gardens, promoting healthy family initiatives; beautifying and connecting deeply with Mother Earth; and initiating community organizations to promote recycling and local Green projects.

In the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, workshops simultaneously triaged the residual trauma of assimilated refugees, while adapting to the immediate trauma of Syrian civil war manifested as acute presenting problems and the tearing off of scabs on old wounds. The indigenous Jordanian and Palestinian and Iraqi refugee populations, along with the recent influx of 1.3 million Syrian refugees, face different challenges. Jordan was impacted by the tense assimilation of 3.25 million Palestinians following the creation of Israel in 1948 and its annexation of the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem, as well as approximately half a million Iraqi refugees a result of the Gulf War and Operation Desert Storm. Seeking to avoid the establishment of more refugee camps such as those erected under the auspices of the United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees (UNHCR) to deal with displaced Palestinians, the Jordanian government is actively seeking to assimilate the majority of Syrian refugees fleeing civil war into mainstream society, with the exception of two large camps: Zaatari (144,000 Syrian refugees), and Al Azraq (a new camp with the capacity to accommodate 130,000 Syrian refugees, 35 miles East of Amman near the Syrian border).

As a result, the government provides to Syrian refugees subsidized housing, food rations, and other welfare benefits that indigenous Jordanians and those of Palestinian origin do not receive. The result is hyper-inflation, skyrocketing real estate and rental prices, and a huge spike in the cost of living. While sympathetic to the plight of the Syrians, many Jordanians resent yet another influx of outsiders who negatively impact national demographics, their favorable balance of power, and the ability to make ends meet. Our team was called upon on a number of occasions to process and heal feelings of resentment of the Syrian refugees by Jordanians, and feelings of despair and being outcast by Syrians.

Upon crossing the northern border near Irbid, Jordan, the team took a taxi to Amman and was greeted by Dr. Ghaleb Alhiary, Professor of Special Education at Al-Hussein Bin Talal University (AHU) in Ma'an, Jordan. Dr. Alhiary, who would serve as our host and translator in the days to come in Jordan, promptly whisked us down the old desert highway the town of Wadi Musa in southern Jordan, where we settled into a simple yet warm and accommodating hotel overlooking the historic, reddish Edom Mountains where the Prophets Moses and Aaron traversed. In the days ahead, we provided workshops under the auspices of UNHCR, the International Relief and Development humanitarian relief organization, and the Jordan River Foundation, and conducted trainings to service providers were held at Al-Hussein Bin Talal University in Ma'an and Jordan University in Amman.

The first morning in Jordan, our team was joined by Kathy and her son Kier Hansen, and we travelled west to Ma'an, 75 miles north of the border of Saudi Arabia. There, unlike in Palestine, which has a Christian population, the society of southern Jordan is strikingly conservative Sunni Muslim. Not a single woman was seen without the *hijab* or Islamic head-covering, with the exception of tourists. Al-Hussain Bin Talal University, established in 1999, has 8,500 students and has had its share of challenges emerging as a prominent and respected institution of higher education in a desert outpost. Nonetheless, more than 130 school of special education and school of education students participated in the ATOP Meaningfulworld training in peace building and empowerment. Due to the conservative nature of the audience and resistance to chakra exercises deemed culturally improper, Dr. Kalayjian modified the training to enhance receptivity by having men and women perform the exercises separately and eliminating yoga positions that could be interpreted as sexually provocative. While the 7-Step Integrative Healing Model and its aspects were, for the most part, new to the university students, they were met first with a degree of shock and awe, and then appreciation, receptivity, joy, and lots of giggles as a result of the healing, release and personal transformation they engendered.



MOU with President of AHU Jordan

~~ Working w Syrian Refugees at IRD & UNHCR

Also that day, our team met with the President of the University, Dr. Taha M. Alkhamis and discussed a variety of social, economic, migration, death, divorce, domestic violence and other traumas experienced in Jordan. In that meeting, a preliminary agreement was made to work with the Ministry of Higher Education to pursue the establishment of a collaborative Master's Program with Columbia University in Psychosocial & Spiritual Education for Trauma Healing, and Building Healthy Communities. The following day, Dr. Kalayjian, a faculty member of Teachers College, Columbia University, met with Abdallah Al-Maharmeh, Director of International Relations at Al-Hussein Bin Talal University. We discussed the initiative, and Dr. Kalayjian was provided with a draft MOU to be pursued through the Columbia Global Center in Amman.

The next day, ATOP Meaningfulworld was invited by UNHCR in conjunction with International Relief and Development (IRD) in Ma'an to deliver a workshop to local Jordanians and Syrians civil war refugees. A mixed population of nearly 40 community elders, men, women and children attended, with an indirect outreach of 21,000 clients. The group was vocal about struggles within and between their communities including unemployment and resource scarcity exacerbated by the influx of refugees. In addition, pervasive dysfunctional pre-Islamic tribal cultural traditions and practices including domestic violence and female insubordination were frankly discussed, eliciting recognition by male and female participants that these practices must end. Again, Dr. Kalayjian modified the workshop curriculum to meet the cultural needs of

attendees by eliminating a number of yoga positions that could be deemed sexual in Muslim culture. When the Islamic call to noon prayer was made, male workshop attendees left the room and women stayed in the lecture hall declining to pray for a reason or reasons that could not be determined, even when all males cleared the room. During this time, Dr. Ani held a focus group with the women, to elicit more information on the trauma impacting their lives.



Taking the Oath for Inner Peace



Providing Bach remedies for healing trauma

The next day in the capital city of Amman, ATOP Meaningfulworld presented a workshop to 20 staff, trainers, volunteers at the Jordan River Foundation's (JRF) Queen Rania Family and Child Center. Established by Queen Noor in 1997, the JRF strives to "strengthen positive healthy interactions among family members, particularly with regards to nurturing children within the family - the basic building block of society." The workshop was a follow-up to that provided last year, and an opportunity to deliver donations to needy Syrian and Jordanian families. Female participants presented as vocal and empowered by JRF trainings and programs. While realistic about the prevalence of domestic violence, they recognized that a new generation of religious leaders supports interventions to protect girls in schools. Challenges faced include: horizontal violence, domestic violence, child abuse, extreme poverty, unemployment, rising inflation, and rising tensions between Jordanians and Syrian refugees due to decreased resources. Recommendations made include: continued engagement in valuable JRF programs; practice peace within through diaphragmatic breathing and positive thinking; growing peace gardens; and continued community service activities. ATOP Meaningfulworld was invited back to conduct a one-week training of group therapy, support group, group counseling and other psychosocial service providers in June 2014. Muntaha Al-Harasis, the JRF's Child Safety Program Manager wrote, "Our gratitude to your team; the feedback from the women about this workshop is very positive and they gained a lot of benefit from it."

The next day, ATOP Meaningfulworld's final day in Jordan, close to hundred students and faculty participated from The School of Education and Psychology at the University of Jordan in Amman. The group was prepared, highly receptive to the 7-Step Integrative Healing Model and asked many questions, clarifying new subjects, and expressing their opinions and curiosity. The primarily master's degree-level audience was very open to new integrative modalities, enthusiastic to learn more about mind-body-spirit healing, knowledgeable of emotional intelligence, and insightful regarding the negative impact of domestic violence and its intergenerational transmission. While some embraced the integration of different healing modalities into their practice of Islam, resistance was expressed by some who stated that prayer could replace other areas of healing. Gender inequality and domestic violence were identified as

societal areas in need of much improvement and education. Participants requested follow-up training programs, online breathing instructions, Skype supervision and coaching, and the possibility of conducting joint research in trauma. A group of male participants committed to starting a men's group to prevent domestic violence.



ATOP Meaningfulworld Team works with Syrian Refugees in Ma'an, Jordan

Upon departing Jordan, our team reflected on the long and intense days spent in Jordan working with distinct populations requiring different healing modalities and interventions. Negative symptoms and challenges faced by indigenous Jordanians included anger and frustration regarding the consumption and extinction of job, housing, employment and social welfare resources. Palestinian and Iraqi refugees now assimilated into Jordan expressed empathy to the plight of Syrian refugees, however confirmed that the cost of living in Jordan has become, in fact, unlivable. Syrian refugees exhibited trauma in the form of hyper-vigilance, emotional and responsive stagnation with few outlets. Common symptoms manifested across all groups included horizontal violence such as domestic violence and ecological neglect. Strengths observed include: gratitude that Jordan was peaceful and stable country despite the prevailing conflict in the Middle East, positive attitude, sense of humor, connection with God and faith, social support, and the ability to accept things beyond one's control. Participants were highly receptive to the energetic release exercises, affirmations, and the need to develop Emotional Intelligence (EQ). Recommendations included: deep breathing exercises, chakra balancing and use of essential oils to create and sustain peace within; establishment of men's groups in order to develop and sustain healthier families; promoting healthy family initiatives; eco-consciousness and connecting deeply with Mother Earth through planting herbs, creating peace and forgiveness gardens, community beautification programs, and the promotion of recycling and Green initiatives.

ATOP Meaningfulworld would like to express deep gratitude to those who made this mission possible and helped plant the seeds of peace and conflict transformation: Lisa Schiller, Dr. Sharon Brennan, Abigail Ortega, Antonio Lugris, Kier Hansen, Lorraine Simmons, Blerina Marku, Katherine Kaze, Marian Weisberg, Harold Takooshian, Lorraine Dwelley, Phyllis Farmer, Marianne Jeffreys, Kate Maggi, Azniv Kalayjian, Ara Boghosian, Margaret Ruiz, Alice Movsesian, Dr. Zeino, Katherine Abdulahad, Dr. Ani Kalayjian, Nelson Bach Flower Remedies, STAPLES in Milford, PA, Natural Selection, Pierre Kattan, Khusro Elley, Abdallah Makhoulf, Aunali Khalfan, Sadiya Scarlett, Steven Heady and Nina Froriep.



At University of Jordan in Amman



Dr. Kalayjian's signature Heart-to-Heart Circle of Gratitude and Love

Founded in 1990, the Association for Trauma Outreach & Prevention (ATOP) Meaningful World, charitable organization affiliated with the United Nations Department of Public Information, has achieved international recognition as a leader in training humanitarian outreach professionals as well as responding to two decades of global and local disasters. ATOP is committed to health and global education promoting state-of-the-art scientific theory, peace, forgiveness, consciousness research, internship, and the development of technical skills to train mental health professionals, teachers, psychologists, art therapists, nutritionists, alternative medicine practitioners, clergy, nurses, mediators, interfaith ministers, and lay persons committed to service the self and humanity. Meaningful World Humanitarian Outreach Program teams have helped rehabilitate survivors from over 45 calamities, making a daily difference in people's lives by helping to transform tragedy and trauma into healing and meaning-making through post trauma growth, resilience, emotional intelligence, mind-body-eco-spirit health, visionary leadership, empowerment and artful collaboration through a new world view.

Our Motto: When one helps another BOTH become stronger