

The Sixth Annual
Abrahamic Reunion Conference

Hosted by the
Esalen Institute's Center for Theory and
Research
and
TRACK TWO: An Institute for Citizen Diplomacy

Esalen Institute
Big Sur, California

March 25-28, 2012

I. Introduction

“What do you need to hear to know we are family?” –Joe Montville

March 2012 marked the sixth time the Esalen Institute's Center for Theory and Research and TRACK TWO: An Institute for Citizen Diplomacy hosted the Abrahamic Family Reunion [AFR]. Dedicated to promoting Muslim-Christian-Jewish reconciliation, the AFR draws upon the shared values of peace and justice to heal the historical wounds between the children of Abraham. The 2012 AFR conference was a forum for academics, citizen diplomats, journalists, religious leaders, and peacemakers to explore opportunities to advance this mission.

Though many of the conversations were imbued with abstract psychological, historical, and theological considerations, the conference maintained a pragmatic focus: How do we advance understanding and action within the Abrahamic Family to promote peace? This document is a summary of those wide-ranging ideas and the ways in which they might be brought to bear in practice.

This report is non-linear, like the conference itself. In the text below the primary historical issues and strategic questions with which the group wrestled are encapsulated thematically. This structure was adopted to produce an easy-to-use record of the event, one that will serve as a common reference point and platform for future AFR efforts.

The specific structure of this text is as follows:

- I. Introduction**
- II. Our Group**
 - a. Participant Information
 - b. Participant Perspectives
 - c. Participants Organizations and Affiliations
- III. Key Questions**
- IV. Geographical Focus Areas**
 - a. Jerusalem
 - b. Poland
 - c. Iran
- V. Topics and Themes**

VI. Common Wounds

II. Our Group

A look at the conference participants and the perspectives they brought to Esalen

Conference Facilitator and Participant:

Joe Montville—Director of Toward the Abrahamic Family Reunion; Distinguished Diplomat in Residence at American University; Chair of the Center for World Religions, Diplomacy, and Conflict Resolution at George Mason University

Bram Briggance—recorder, note-taker

Conference Participants:

Huda Abu Arqoub—Co-Executive director of Abraham’s Vision; Co-Executive Director and co-founder of the Center for Transformative Education; educator; human rights activist

Kamal Abu-Shamsieh—Director of the Islamic Cultural Center of Fresno; television producer

Evan Anderson—Project Coordinator for the Christian-Muslim Summit; policy advisor; counselor

Vanessa Gomez Brake—Director of Operations and Outreach at The Chaplaincy Institute; facilitator and peacemaker

Haim Dov Beliak—Envoy of the World/European Union for Progressive Judaism to Biet Polska, Poland; Executive Director of HaMifgash: An On-Going Conversation Among Jewish Intellectuals; rabbi

Marc Gopin—James H. Laue Professor of Religion, Diplomacy and Conflict Resolution, and Director of the Center for World Religions, Diplomacy, and Conflict Resolution at George Mason University’s School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution; peace-maker; author

Aaron J. Hahn Tapper—Assistant Professor in Theology and religious Studies Department at the University of San Francisco; founder of Abraham’s Vision; Co-Executive Director and co-founder of the Center for Transformative Education

Mary Ellen Klee—Arica teacher, acupuncturist; Esalen Board Member

Peter Kovach—diplomat; interfaith worker; mystic

Mohamed Lazzouni—Visiting Scholar at the Jesuit Institute at Boston College; CTO and Vice-President at MorphoTrust USA; physicist; Imam

Tamar Miller—Radio producer; political, media leadership and social change consultant; facilitator

Carol Miskel—Member of the Board of Directors, TRACK TWO: An Institute for Citizen Diplomacy

Dulce Murphy—President and Executive Director of TRACK TWO: An Institute for Citizen Diplomacy

Michael Murphy—co-founder and Chairman Emeritus of the Esalen Institute, founder of Esalen’s Center for Theory and Research; Esalen Board Member; author

Sahar Namazikha—Research Associate at the Center on Religion, Diplomacy and Conflict Resolution at George Mason University; journalist and editor

John Pawlikowski—Professor of Social Ethics at Chicago Theological Union; author; Catholic priest

Our Points of Reference

Much of the first day of the AFR conference was spent sharing the personal and professional perspectives the participants brought to the conference. These exchanges helped promote a better understanding of “who was in the room,” and the desires and beliefs that would shape their subsequent explorations.

Below are some of the points of reference, frames, and experiences that shaped the discussion...

Geographical Homes and Reference Points for the Group:

- New York City
- Libya
- Israel
- Eastern Europe
- The West Bank
- Indonesia
- Hebron
- Iran
- Pakistan
- Romania
- Tajikistan
- Jordan
- New Jersey
- Boston
- Santa Barbara
- Sierra Leone

- Morocco
- Oxford
- Fresno
- Munich
- Iowa
- Phoenix
- Chicago
- Poland
- Florida
- Gaza Strip
- San Francisco Bay Area
- Los Angeles
- Montreal
- Upper Midwest
- Saudi Arabia
- Turkey
- Washington, D.C.
- Esalen
- Gaza Strip

Group Faith Traditions and Religious Experiences:

- Judaism
- Catholicism
- Protestantism
- Physics
- Mennonite tradition
- Islam
- Sufism
- Mysticism
- Wisdom traditions
- The Esalen tradition
- Parent of a Muslim convert
- Marxism
- Distrust of all religious traditions
- Interfaith marriages

Professional and Life Experience informing the Groups Opinions:

- Business
- Psychotherapy

- Television Production
- Academia
- Authorship
- Journalism
- Islamic chaplaincy
- Rabbinate
- Priesthood
- Ministry
- Health care
- Law
- Mediation
- Community organizing
- Peacemaking
- Writing
- Philosophy
- Science
- International relations

Group Age Range: from early 20s to early 80s

Participants' Organizations & Direct Affiliations:

- ◆ Esalen
- ◆ TRACK TWO
- ◆ International Abrahamic Network
- ◆ Abrahamic Family Reunion
- ◆ Chaplaincy Institute for Arts & Interfaith
- ◆ Presidio Graduate School
- ◆ George Mason University
- ◆ Abraham's Vision
- ◆ Center for Transformative Education
- ◆ Islamic Cultural Center of Fresno
- ◆ Christian-Muslim Summit
- ◆ World/European Union for Progressive Judaism
- ◆ HaMifgash: An On-Going Conversation Among Jewish Intellectuals
- ◆ Center for World Religions, Diplomacy, and Conflict Resolution at George Mason University's School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution
- ◆ University of San Francisco
- ◆ Jesuit Institute at Boston College
- ◆ MorphoTrust USA
- ◆ Chicago Theological Union

I. Key Questions

A glance at the inquiries that shaped conference conversations

Rather than simply being a chance for experts to present their work, CTR meetings are driven by real-time inquiry. Providing an environment in which difficult and sensitive questions about historical trauma, religious traditions, and citizen diplomacy could be asked was inherent in the design of this AFR conference. Some the questions the group wrestled with were identified in advance of the conference; others arose, or were refined, as conversation unfolded. Below are some of the key questions that shaped the dialogue.

What are the bases for new social contracts in the Middle East? What are the foundations upon which a lasting peace can be built? What are the parameters of a shared social context for reciprocity and mutual recognition? How can we promote universally beneficial joint action?

What is the role of religion in promoting peace and healing? Are religious identity and practice antithetical to peace? Are they the basis of it? Do the Abrahamic faiths, in particular, provide a opportunity for positive interfaith engagement?

Who is the AFR's proper target audience? Should the group concentrate on those who have direct influence on policy? Are activists and citizen diplomats our target? NGOs? Academics and media pundits? Where can the AFR find the most leverage?

What accounts for the lack of "contagion" in previous peace efforts? Working for peace in the Middle East is nothing new; why haven't efforts been more successful? What accounts for the success that has been realized? Does an effective spread strategy for peace exist?

How do we overcome fatigue and despair? Naturally, the perpetual lack of progress in Middle East can cause the enthusiasm of even the most optimistic peacemakers to flag. How can we acknowledge these frustrations without surrendering to them. What are the sources of inspiration and energy that peacemakers can draw upon in the face of seemingly intractable obstacles?

How do we bring market forces to bear in our work? How can AFR and other change agents harness economic power to engender reform? In what ways can we bring market forces into alignment with the those policies that promote long-term peace in the Middle East. Are there extant models to inform this work?

How can we acknowledge the negative effects of trauma without reopening wounds? How do we honor the grievances and pain of previous conflict in a way that promotes healing? How do we memorialize the past without preserving its destructive power?

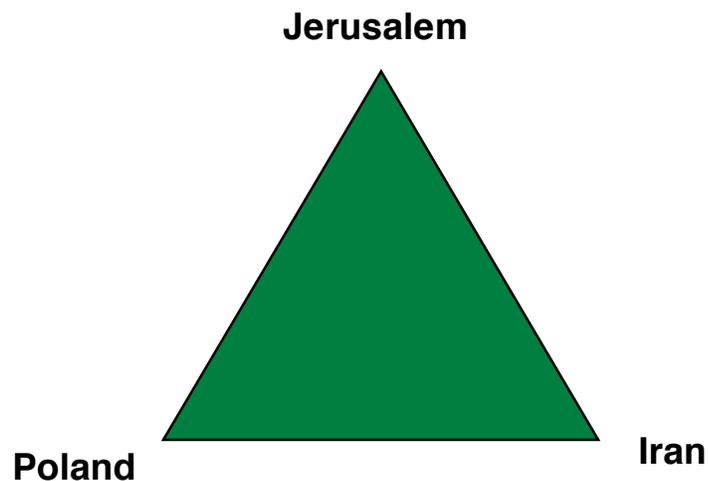
How do we shift our attention from healing to prevention? “Healing history” is central to the mission of the AFR, but this focus is, by its nature, a historical one. How can the group pivot from healing the past to promoting the future.

How can we best apply our expertise to folks on the ground? The AFR has significant collective wisdom to share. What information, political frames, tools, and best practices should it be sharing with folks “on the ground”? What are the methods and channels through which these can be disseminated?

IV. Geographical Focus Areas

Using Jerusalem, Poland, and Iran as guideposts...

Joe Montville provided a geographical and historical constellation by which the conference could guide itself by introducing three focus areas: Jerusalem, Poland, and Iran. The conjunction of these three locales provided a prism through which the group could refract many issues regarding the people of the Abrahamic faiths. Some of the issues brought into relief by this triangular configuration included the origins of identity, the intersections of politics and faith, historical etiology, and current geopolitical crises. Many of the particular topics each of these places raised are listed in the paragraphs immediately below.



Jerusalem

“Pray for the peace of Jerusalem.” -- Psalms 122:6

Jerusalem was a focal issue of the conference, as both a geographical and symbolic center for Jewish-Christian-Muslim reconciliation. Using Jerusalem as a touchstone, the conference participants explored possible bases for a new social framework for peace in the region. Introducing the topic of Jerusalem, Joe Montville asked, “How do we, keeping Jerusalem in our sights, heal the deep wounds of history in the Middle East?”

In a sense, this holy city played a sort of metonymical role throughout the conference--the problems of Jerusalem are the problems of the Middle East: disruptive boundaries (some natural, some unnecessary); physical and psychological separations; economic interdependence and inequity; an acute sense history’s burdens; and the site of countless acts of wonder and unspeakable cruelty. Of particular interest to the group was the way in which the holy city is a magnet for religious, ethnic, and political extremism. Several participants lamented the steady exodus of moderate Muslims, Jews and Christians from the city. “Of course it attracts extremists,” remarked one Middle East expert, “who else would live there?”

While some members had reservations about devoting time and attention to political engagement with extremists, most believed it is, to some degree, necessary in order to achieve progress in peace efforts. Drawing upon the group’s experiences in Jerusalem, the question of how one “moves the needle” in peacemaking efforts was debated passionately. Despite many disagreements, there was something close to consensus regarding the value of several approaches. First, strong political and social leadership was seen as essential. Many participants expressed frustration about the current dearth of “brave leaders.” Also, the group believed that cultivating young and promising leaders is an important investment for the long-term health of the region.

Second, in order to “reset” the framework for peace, new narratives and tangible proposals will have to be developed. These narratives must be “workable” in that they account for the complexities of the stakeholders’ competing interests, but also lay the foundation for a shared, lasting, and mutually-beneficial peace. Likewise, specific proposals with clear effects were also called for by the group. Without specifics, progress will never last. A couple of the peacemakers were particularly adamant about the need to recognize the inherent political, economic and social asymmetries among the various stakeholders in the region. Without fully accounting for these imbalances of power, any narrative construct or peace proposal will be severely compromised.

Third, peacemakers must tap all available sources of power to leverage and advance their causes. These include localized pressure from small groups, personal acts of tolerance or bravery, and the reinforcement of new and positive social norms. Additionally, many participants believed that market forces are underutilized in promoting political and social change in the region, and should be harnessed more deliberately.

Finally, timing was considered an essential element to successful peacemaking. Recognizing opportunities as they present themselves, and knowing when to strike, are invaluable and hard-won skills that should not be underestimated.

Discussions of participants’ peacekeeping experiences in Jerusalem were among the most heated exchanges of the conference, and the subject of more than one tearful story. At Esalen, as in the Middle East politics, the Jerusalem was always present.

Poland

“There are many Polands.” -- John Pawlikowski

Poland is often thought of as monolithically Catholic, but Poland’s religious history is rich and pluralistic, including Poland playing a role in both the Reformation and the rise of Unitarianism. Polish history and culture are also deeply intertwined with the

fate of European Jews in the 20th Century. Father John Pawlikowski and Rabbi Haim Dov Beliak led conference participants in a discussion of the complicated history of Judaism in Poland, issues regarding Polish and Jewish identity, and Poland's relevance to the religious challenges of our day.

In this sense, Poland provides a sort of historical "homeland" by which to examine many aspects of the pre-Holocaust culture of European Jews. At the time of the Holocaust Poland had the largest population of Jews on the continent. Because the Polish Jews played such a major role in the politics and culture of Poland, understanding that history is essential to having a comprehensive view of both Poland and the Jewish experience in Europe, and well as the project of "healing" their unique histories.

"The Polish people see Poland as a 'project' begun in 1919, interrupted in 1939, and started again in 1989," Beliak stated. As Poland continues to redefine itself in the wake of communism, recapturing its distinct voice is inextricably tied with reclaiming the contributions made by Jewish Poles, perhaps most explicitly in literature. Current and historical ambiguities and tensions regarding Poland's relation to its Jewish history offers a window into modern issues of Jewish identity, and into the challenges of healing the wounds of the Holocaust. This refinement of the Polish identity, and its Jewish past, is complex; questions over who counts as "Jewish" abound.

These issues are further complicated by deep-seated anti-semitism and competing narratives of victimhood within Poland. Jews often serve as a foundational "other" in Polish nationalism, particularly during the second half of the 20th Century. Many Poles, cherry-picking historical associations of Judaism with Polish nobles, combine anti-elitist sentiments with resentment of Jews. "The communist Jew" is also a common stereotype in Poland, and many modern Poles still assign a disproportional blame to Jews for the rise of socialism. Add to this mix the indelible scars of the Holocaust, and one begins to see the ways Poland offers a window into many of the most pressing issues for the AFR.

Poland also warrants the attention of Middle East peacemakers due to the significant role it plays in in Zionist history and the creation of Israel. Shimon Peres has

stated that Israel was “born in Poland.” Like its relationship to its Jewish past, Poland’s historical relationship to Zionism is also a complicated one. Poland’s Jewish community was at the vanguard of the Zionist movement, including many who wanted to establish a Jewish state within Poland. There was also Zionist support among non-Jews, though some viewed a Jewish state as simply a humane alternative to the policies of Hitler.

Strong cultural, commercial, and political ties between Poland and Israel continue today. Poles feel a deep kinship with the Jewish ‘ex-pats’ in Israel. Poland serves as a “medical center” for Israel and other parts of the Middle East, and tourism and trade relations are very important for both nations. Diplomatic pressure from the U.S. in the wake of 1989, and Pope John Paul II’s outreach to the Jewish community, also served as catalysts for positive Polish-Israeli relations.

Both Pawlikowski and Beliak are currently working on projects to foster cultural exchanges and to cultivate a richer understanding of the complicated history and unique contributions of the Jewish experience in Poland. It is their hope that building community among Polish Jews, and between Polish Jews and other communities will serve the interests of all parties.

Iran

“The relevance of Iran is the fear of war.” -- Joe Montville

Conference discussions about Iran concentrated on two themes: First, the threat of war between Iran and Israel (or the U.S.) was imminent. The AFR spent considerable time discussing current means of deescalating tensions, and possible ways the group could aid in these efforts. While most thought war was unlikely, all participants viewed the need to improve relations between Iran and the U.S. and Israel as both paramount and urgent. These considerations cropped up in many of the sessions throughout the week.

The second area of concentration for the group regarding Iran was examining the impediments to better relations between Iran and Israel and the West. Leading this discussion was Sahar Namazikha. In her opening remarks Namazikha articulated a longing among Iranians to heal relations with the U.S., especially younger folks who view animosity with the West as their “fathers’ conflict.” She also offered her perspectives on U.S.-Iranian relations with a eye toward understanding the particular historical wounds that stymie progress. Besides the obvious tensions due to the Iran hostage crisis and ongoing issues regarding Palestine, she identified three important Iranian wounds that need to be addressed: 1) the foreign-backed coup of 1953; 2) U.S support for Iraq in the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s; and 3) the downing of an Iranian airliner by a U.S. missile in 1988.

In 1953 the U.S. and Britain orchestrated a political coup d’etat that ousted the democratically elected Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddegh. In the wake of the coup Mohammad-Reza Shah Pahlavi, who had been a constitutional monarch, was installed as an authoritarian leader. This profound disempowerment of the Iranian people by foreign powers (motivated primarily by Western oil interests) was deeply traumatic and continues to nourish resentment among the people of Iran today.

Likewise, the United States’ support if Iraq in the Iran-Iraq war continues to plague U.S-Iranian relations. In particular, the implicit support of Iraq’s use of chemical weapons (in violation of international law) has left a bitter legacy. Many of Iran’s current political leaders came of age during the 1980s and were directly involved in the conflict; their personal connections to these grievances make peace efforts especially difficult.

Another issue that haunts U.S.-Iran relations is the destruction of the Iranian Airbus passenger plane over the Strait of Hormuz in 1988 by an American missile. All 290 passengers died, including 66 children and 46 non-Iranians. While the United States Navy admitted that the incident was due to their misidentifying the aircraft as a fighter jet, the United States government has never formally apologized for the incident. Adding insult to injury, in 1996 the U.S. paid reparations to the victims’ families at a rate well below that used in similar incidents. (As a comparison, families of the victims of the Pam Am fight over Lockerbie Scotland, which occurred only a few months after the

Iranian Airbus tragedy, were paid \$10 million each; this amount is about 46 times greater than the \$215,000 the families of the victims aboard the Iranian flight received.)

In the service of healing these historical wounds, Namazikha encouraged the participants to keep a few things in mind. Regarding Iran's nuclear program, she reiterated to the group that its success is deeply tied to Iran's sense of identity as a world leader, and as an insurance against foreign aggression. She also emphasized that fact that the pain of economic sanctions against Iran, is suffered by its inhabitants, but not necessarily by the government itself, in a sense, they are victims of the government as well. Finally, she reminded the group of the incredible power apology has in healing and in fostering peace.

V. Topics and Themes

Encapsulations of the topics and issues discussed

Anything approaching a complete catalogue of the content areas and ideas addressed throughout the conference would be impossible. Instead, below the reader will find many of the primary themes and perspectives raised by participants arranged in topic clusters. These clusters are not presented in any particular order; their rich and varied foci reflect the open and interactive nature of the Reunion itself.

Jerusalem as Emblematic of Larger Struggles Not only does Jerusalem lie at the heart of many of the geographic, historical, and political struggles of the Middle East, but it also captures the essence of the sociological strife as well. The city's populace, both Muslim and Jewish, has become increasingly conservative and confrontational in its politics and policies. The divisions within Jerusalem resemble the divisive contours of Middle East.

Ramallah as a "Beta Site" for Peace? In direct contrast to Jerusalem, there are many aspects of life in Ramallah that could be a harbinger for Jewish-Muslim better relations. Ramallah's culture re-enforces positive Israeli-Palestinian interaction in political, academic, and social circles, and tends to abjure extremism. Optimism for adopting Ramallah as a model for other communities was tempered by the fact it is a relatively

secular community; thus, its successes may belie advantages more religious communities do not have.

The Deleterious Side Effects of International Aid There is no doubt that the monetary support of peace efforts in the Middle East is critical to their success. However, these resources come with harmful side effects. The group was troubled by the internecine struggles spurred by funding issues in the NGO community. “Funding has a way of turning potential partners into competitors and beggars,” one participant remarked.

“Microbes” as a Metaphor for Change Change often happens in subtle and almost imperceptible ways. While grand efforts sometime succeed, the group explored the importance of actions on a smaller scale, and their potential to “go viral.”

One-State vs. Two-State Solution for Israel Despite consensus on a lot of issues, there were strong and divergent opinions on the political solution to Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Some believed a two-state solution offered the best hope for lasting peace. Others believed that such a solution will only forestall the deep integration necessary to sustain peace in the region.

Conditions for Meaningful Change Stated both explicitly at times, and reflected implicitly throughout, the group identified three necessary (though not necessarily sufficient) conditions for progress: 1) Strong and effective leadership, 2) a productive and shared narrative, and 3) proper timing.

Inextricability of Healing and Human Dignity from Achieving Peace The core principles of preserving human dignity and healing the wounds of historical trauma were clearly and repeatedly affirmed by all participants. Not only was a person-centered, historically-sensitive approach to peace considered useful, it was seen as absolutely necessary to lasting peace.

“People Power” is Critical to Success In keeping with the spirit of TRACK TWO, the importance of using the tools of citizen diplomacy to directly empower people (as opposed to through governments or other organizations) was stated emphatically. The group was much more sanguine about the promise of “bottom-up” approaches to creating peace rather than through “top-down” channels of influence.

Death of Leadership The group generally lamented the current lack of promising political leadership in the Middle East. In such times, citizen diplomacy and organic peace efforts are even more critical.

The Importance of Fun At a few points during the week, participants expressly acknowledged the incredible value of having fun. Peacemaking and citizen diplomacy are stressful, and often heartbreaking; like with most human endeavors, finding ways for partners enjoy each other is invaluable.

Need to Learn from Past Successes History is filled with countless successful efforts to foster peace, both great and small. The group emphasized the importance of learning from these successes (and failures); the needs for effective peacemaking are urgent, and there is no reason to start from scratch.

Power of Small Gestures “Never underestimate the power of small gestures,” said one participant. Ping Pong diplomacy, art exchanges, and other seemingly insignificant activities have had a huge impact in promoting productive relations and action. Moving stories about the profound effect of simple apologies were also shared.

Humor as Fertile Ground for Understanding and Affecting Human Behavior Humor is a vital coping mechanism, and the AFR group was well versed in psychology. Whether as a means of humanizing interactions, or as a lens through which to understand political discontent, humor is a field that warrants the careful attention of the citizen diplomat.

New Generation as Hope Though perhaps a little dismal, many participants took some solace in the fact that the reaper may help facilitate a more peaceful Middle East. Because many of the pressures retarding peace efforts stem from older generations, and because younger folks are more inclined toward cooperation and reconciliation, demography and time may offer solutions that are currently unavailable.

The Underutilized Power of Women One perennial theme during the meetings was the vital role woman play in community building and peace. Both sexism and a lack of imagination by some have resulted in the underutilization of women in efforts to engender social change.

Profound Effects of Demographic, Economic, and Technologic Forces Despite the considerable geopolitical forces that will shape the future of the Middle East, there are deeper, more far-reaching influences at play--demography, economics, and technology. Like tectonic plates below the surface, these three social forces will have profound and somewhat unpredictable effects on the future of the region.

Disengagement vs. Transactional Diplomacy One issue that sparked deep disagreement was the value of political and social disengagement. Some participants held that there are conditions under which severing relations can have a positive effect on long-term solutions by clearly signaling disapproval. Others thought that transactional diplomacy is almost always the answer--that one cannot make peace with those with whom they have no relations.

BDS vs. Positive Investment A corollary to the disengagement discussion above was a debate about the utility of boycotts, divestiture, and sanctions in creating political change. Some believed the thoughtful deployment of these tools can be have a positive effect; others held that these methods disproportionately affect populaces that have no control over policy, and tend to exacerbate the rifts between peoples.

The Curse of Identity Politics According to the group, there is perhaps no force as destructive to peace, nor more antithetical to the mission of the AFR, than identity politics. National, religious, and ethnic identifications that supersede the recognition of our common humanity lie at the root of tremendous strife and destruction.

Cardinal Project Considerations One point of agreement among the seasoned peacemakers was the critical importance of two preconditions for successful multi-stakeholder projects: 1) choosing the right partners; and 2) the establishing clean, clear, and objective measurements of success.

Success Through Interdependency When it comes to community building and peacemaking, interdependence is a key factor. The more disparate parties rely upon each other, the higher the stake they have in creating and maintaining peaceful relations.

Separation of Objectives from Means One caveat proposed by a few discussants was the need to distinguish between the objectives of political actions and the means deployed to achieve them. Political movements have a tendency to amass their own purposes and lose track of their fundamental purpose. It is important to "keep your eyes on the prize."

Overt Conversations about Power and Inequality are Required For the sake of interpersonal credibility and realism, the conference participants affirmed the importance of acknowledging asymmetries in power between potential peace partners. Such conversations are often uncomfortable, but unless relevant differences are named, progress is compromised.

Democracy as Counterproductive Among Westerners democratic processes are generally considered inherently good. However, the AFR attendees explored some of the ways in which democratic movements, including those of the “Arab Spring,” may complicate efforts to foster peace (at least in the short run.) The dynamic relations between the democratic and peacemaking forces is complex, and unpredictable.

Eschatology as “Despair” Christian eschatology, especially that which imbues the theology of the Evangelical American right, has often played a destructive role in Middle East peace efforts. The possible psychological roots of this brand of eschatological thinking were considered, including intellectually laziness, Manichean tendencies, and a general sense of despair.

V. Common Wounds

In the course of their conversations, the participants offered numerous examples of historical and personal instances of trauma. While the particularities of these hardships were often instructive, the commonalities were even more striking. As the AFR moves forward with its work, recognizing the shared nature of these wounds may help strengthen the fabric of the Abrahamic community.

- Pain and suffering
- Shame
- Dehumanization
- Powerlessness
- Being the “other”
- Ambiguity

- Manipulation
- Usurpation of political autonomy
- Cycles of victimhood
- Overgeneralization and stereotypes
- Lack of love and respect
- Loss or denial of voice
- Loss or denial of legal status
- Loss or denial of home
- Loss of hope
- Loss of our peaceful narrative
- Loss of our better natures and best selves