

Chutzpod! Episode 60: Independence and Interdependence

April 28, 2023

Story Transcripts

Michal Froman

I was born in Shiloh, a settlement in Samaria. My childhood was between the first and the second intifada. There was a lot of fear, so I didn't get to know no Palestinian as a human being. I didn't know their culture, their language or their story, although they were the closest neighbor of my settlement. After I got married with Shivi, the son of Rabbi Menachem Froman, only then it was the first time that I met Palestinians, friends of the Froman family. And it was the first time that I got to know their story, to hear them, to listen to them, to understand their, their willing to live, their willing to love. And the big walls of fear that was in my heart slowly started to melt.

Seven years ago, I got stopped in terror attack by a Palestinian boy from Beit Lechem (Bethlehem). I was pregnant with my fifth child. When I was in the ambulance, I remember one of the stories of a Palestinian friend of the Froman family. He was in jail after he stabbed Israelis. And in the jail, in the Israeli jail, he got to know the Israeli story. He read books and he saw movies, and he decided that he will be a peace activist.

So I remember it when I was in the ambulance, and I had difficult time to breathe, and I, I heard that someone shooting the boy, I heard them shoot gun. And I understand that I don't want this boy to, to die because I knew and I believe that he can change his way and he can choose life. So in those moment it was very, very clear that if now I choosing hatred and I choosing the willing to to revenge, it'll take my life to darkness. So I understand that I want to choose life, and life in the meaning of love and opportunity for forgiveness. An opportunity to bring good to my environment.

So since then, then I became a peace activist. And I believe that only through here from Tekoa in the settlements, only through here, I can bring peace because this is the land where Abraham, the father of the Palestinians and the father of the Israelis, this is where he settled and this is where he had deep conversations with God and everything started from here.

So no the settlements is not the problem in the way to piece the problem. It's what happening in the hearts of the people. And if the heart is open, like the tent of Abraham, if the heart is open and if the heart is willing to forgive, there is space for everyone. This is my belief.

Souliman Khatib

Hello, hello, dear sisters and brothers and community, salam, shalom to everyone. I really feel still, you know, processing and the excitement and the adrenaline that I got from the last night Joint Palestinians Memorial Day, which we organized for the 18th time. This is really a powerful ceremony and vibration of the people and the land.

In the park in Tel Aviv, where Palestinian and Israeli Jewish and Arab Palestinian and Israelis mourned their beloved ones that they lost in this conflict unfortunately. We mourned them together and we share moments of tears and sadness and memories and longing. Yeah. This ceremony started 18 years ago with the maybe 70 people attended in a place in Tel Aviv, and every year got bigger and bigger until we became a central event and even become a global model event of mourning our beloved ones and their memory together.

The ceremony that was held last night really was like a place to really feel. The new conscious, new ground, the new values that we are trying to build here. The new story that we try to build here, which is basically you can still connect, connect your roots, and to your own story, the sorrow, the pain, the joy, everything, your culture, your identity, while you are opening up your heart, your soul, to the interconnection here of the vibration of people, and feel the same for others that are different from you or similar.

This is really by itself a big important value for me to say that our liberation is really interconnected in this land especially, but even beyond in the human level, you know, like we come from very similar roots actually, and we want to really be truth to our stories, to ourselves and honor our peoples, and it doesn't conflict at all honoring and respect and feel other people's sadness and losses.

It's actually liberating the heart and liberating the unfold, you know, stories that we carry on since generations, maybe even beyond that, like the traumas, the collective trauma, the individual trauma, the healing is really happening together. This togetherness and uniqueness and warmth that I felt last night is so special and unique and felt truly in my heart and my soul in the deepest level inside me. A true liberation actually for us, both Palestinians and Israelis, together and beyond.

Zion Regev

A few years ago, the state of Israel decided to narrow the gaps and forty years of neglect in East Jerusalem, the most explosive, complicated place in the world. It was part of the understanding that investment in East Jerusalem is a pure Israeli interest. During the last five years, I'm in charge of the implementation of this investment in the education system of East Jerusalem. Investment in schools with a very bad physical conditions, with a huge rate of dropout, with a very low academic achievements, and especially with low level of hopes and dreams.

My daily life is a very, in a very tough environment with the lack of faith and with huge political stresses. Especially around the curriculum, but there are also some islands of hopes, like the new youth movement that we established, a conservatory school, new schools that we built and some more.

And then the Corona arrived. Suddenly we are in a different game with a joint enemy, very danger enemy, and it was clear from the first moment that in this war, the war in the Corona, there is no borders between East and West, Arabs and Jews, Palestinians and Israelis. The mayor of Jerusalem established a professional forum for the war in the Corona.

This forum includes people from the education field, welfare, army, police, and medical staffs. From the very first moment, he insists that around the table will sit also the principals of the Palestinian hospitals in East Jerusalem. Those hospitals belongs to the Palestinian authority. It was the first time for them to sit around the table with Israeli officials like the Israeli hospitals. They raised some request and received budget. It was very clear that they are part of this war.

This war continue with a vaccine operation that was run by a military unit that responsible about emergencies in Israel. The schools turned into vaccination station and you could see there are soldiers, pupils, old people, young peoples, Arabs, Jews, all of them working together.

One of the highlights moment of this period was during the Israeli Independence Day when the Israeli Air Force is flying all over Israel in the Corona year. The decision that was taken was that the Israeli Air Force will fly above all the hospitals in Israel in order to cherish them and honor them for the very hard work they did during fighting the disease.

The mayor of Jerusalem insisted that the Israeli Air Force will fly also above the hospitals of Jerusalem and will salute them as well. One of the most impossible touching pictures I have in my computer showing the Israeli Air Force flying above Augusta Victoria Palestinian Hospital on Mount Olive, the reaction of the East Jerusalem residents for this symbolic action was even much more touching and surprising. Most of them saw it as a big honor for them, and mostly they felt that they are part of something. I know that the Corona period is just a little moment in the history, one little moment that the East Jerusalem residents felt they are part of something, that someone is really take care about them.

But this little moment give me a lot of hope.

Lama Abuarqoub

My son is a well-known case of severe osteogenesis imperfecta. It has been a very long journey of painful treatment. The Palestinian Authority paid for a 20, 25 day duration of treatment at the hospital in West Jerusalem. The staff was Jewish Israeli who were always there for my needs, starting with treatment and ending with the shoulder to cry on.

My Israeli Jewish friends volunteered delivering medicines when they were not available in Palestine. They took the journey all the way from Tel Aviv to Hebrew City in Palestine because they knew otherwise my son will suffer.

My other son, a 20 year old fine young man once put his, his life at risk on Route 60 to help a settler who had a heart attack. He stopped the car, pulled out the man, and tried to give him first aid until the soldiers came. They were pointing guns at my son, thinking he was attacking the settler. He also was trying to comfort a Jewish child in the backseat of the settler and when they, they realized what my son has, has done. One of them actually shook hands with him and said, you're a fine young man.

That same son of mine was detained by the soldiers a few months later. His car was searched and along with other three friends of his, he was violently treated by the Israeli soldiers just because these soldiers thought that there are metals in the car and they were looking where why the metals are there. It was his equipment. He's an electrician.

It's not the people, it's the context that forces itself, the context of occupation. My closest friend for many years now is an amazing Jewish woman, a school from Tel Aviv. The best moments of my life as a woman and as a peace activist have been spent with my coworker, a great Jewish facilitator.

It can be done. It's not impossible to have a life and share this land and enjoy everything that this land is generously giving both people the Israeli and the Palestinian,