



עובדים סוציאליים לשלום ולרווחה  
عمال اجتماعيين من اجل السلام والرفاه  
Social Workers for Peace and Social Welfare

## Municipal Managers from the Haifa Youth Authority Group

Reflections from the concluding session

February 3, 2011

Facilitators: Yair Levin and Amal Bshara



A diverse group of Jewish and Arab municipal managers from the Haifa Youth Authority concluded their five month long series of Historical Conciliation workshops led by ICfC-trained Ossim Shalom Arab and Jewish facilitators. Composed of municipality employees from mixed religions, these Haifa Youth Authority managers all work in the same department, which manages Arab and Jewish youth activities in Haifa.

The aim of the conciliation workshops was to improve understanding amongst these Jewish and Arab colleagues so that they may form a better infrastructure for working together. In addition, the workshop aimed at improving their work and deepening connections with citizens and youths of

different religions in Haifa, with its delicate bi-national balance. The idea was that they would implement what they experienced in the workshops so as to be more effective advocates of peace, serving as role models to the youth they work with. The group started the Historical Conciliation program in mid September and has concluded the sessions after about 5 months of hard and demanding dialogue work with Ossim Shalom facilitators, Amal Bshara and Yair Levin.

Feedback from participants to facilitators:

**Benny:** The political situation in the region is bad. People are drifting apart and are losing confidence in one another. The tension between Arabs and Jews is increasing. Specifically because of this troubling situation I think that the workshop was extremely important for us at this department in the municipality. I think you can already feel the change when we meet in the halls and in the meetings of the department. We have gotten closer to one another when at the same time the political atmosphere was going the opposite way. I think that this group is marvelous!

I took the things I experienced back to my job as the manager of a Youth Center. I thought to myself: if I developed a better understanding of "the other" through this workshop, I could certainly try to impact the kids I'm working with and get the Arabs and the Jews to work and play together.

**Bushra:** The 2 days of the "intensive weekend" were great, they were strong and influential. I am of course also happy that I participated in this 5 months long workshop. It contributed a lot but I wish we had more time to hear personal stories. I feel that's the most intriguing part.

**Giora:** I observed that for some people in the group it was the first time they heard stories and opinions from the "other side." For some it was a shocking experience, listening to different national narratives and points of view. My family is a member of the *Parents Circle – Family Forum of Israeli and Palestinian Bereaved Families*, as I myself come from a bereaved family that lost a loved one in a terrorist attack. Through the Family Forum I met with many Palestinians so I was not surprised to hear the other side's stories in this workshop.

**Wassim:** The fact that we had a dialogue is important in itself. It was extremely meaningful for me to hear other people's stories and thoughts. It was important for me to be able to express mine. I also think that the attendance to all the sessions is essential. When participants of the group were absent and missed a session, it had a negative affect on the dynamics of the group.