

FETZER INSTITUTE & ESALEN INSTITUTE

Abrahamic Family Reunion

Workshop at Season's Resort

Kalamazoo, Michigan

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[A SUMMARY BY VANESSA BRAKE]

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*Pictured from top left to right:
Evan P. Anderson, Tamar Miller, Tom Block, Gordon Wheeler, Rev. Mary Haddad, Walid Abdul
Jawad, Vanessa Brake, Joseph Montville, Judith Fleenor, Hajj Victor Ghalib Begg, Brenda Rosenberg.*

In early September 2008, the first Abrahamic Family Reunion (AFR) convened a group of interfaith academics and citizen practitioners at the Fetzer Institute's Season's conference center in Kalamazoo, Michigan. Twenty-two representatives of Jewish, Christian and Muslim traditions participated in a four day workshop whose aim was to explore together cognitive and contemplative elements of the AFR approach to healing history and how to integrate them into practice.¹

On the evening of Sunday, September 7th, the group gathered for an opening reception, Iftar dinner and self-introductions, asking people to tell an illustrative inspired story about what brought them to this moment. Participants were welcomed by Fetzer hosts, Eric Nelson and David Addiss, by project director Joseph Montville and by Esalen Institute CEO Gordon Wheeler. Tamar Miller, the workshop facilitator and Yehezkel Landau, workshop contemplative guide, also welcomed participants. The evening ended with a short video of a Memorial Day 2008 gathering at All Saints Episcopal Church of Pasadena, California. The video was of Jewish, Muslim and Christian clergy who sang movingly in harmony, three very different sacred songs in their three respective languages, Hebrew, Arabic and English.

The following morning, several group members took part in a meditative walk through the forest and lake area that surrounds the resort. Soon after, all participants gathered in the main meeting room for Yehezkel Landau's guided meditation on light as a sacred symbol. Rabbi Or Rose, Rev. Canon Mary Haddad and Imam Faheem Shuaibe each shared an excerpt from their holy texts that reflected on the symbol of light. Before reading, each lit a candle that would then remain burning through the entirety of the morning's proceedings.

Joseph Montville then showed a video from Reconciliation Australia titled *The Apology*.² The documentary highlights February 13, 2008, when Prime Minister Kevin Rudd publicly apologized for the wrongdoings committed against aborigines,³ reinforcing hope and determination for reconciliation in Australia.

After viewing *The Apology* participants everyone reflected on its message and how it could inform our work in Abrahamic reconciliation. Several individuals spoke of the sincerity of the PM's apology, as compared to many politicians whose words often seem hollow. This observation led to a discussion of how such statements can be presented genuinely, and be seen as legitimate by public opinion. However, several participants were skeptical about the possibility of such apologies taking place in the U.S., or even among Abrahamic leaders.

¹ A list of participants and their bios can be found in the Appendix

² Go here to view a trailer of the documentary - <http://www.reconciliationaustralia.org/i-cms.jsp?page=723> The full length version can also be found on youtube.com

³ Full text of the PM's speech can be read here - http://www.pm.gov.au/media/Speech/2008/speech_0073.cfm

David Bossman suggested that the difference between sincere apologies and apparently empty statements by other politicians was the ritualization and ceremony that was enacted before the apology occurred. At one point in the video, a gift is symbolically passed from one party (aborigines) to the other (Prime Minister) during a welcoming event. Had the words of PM Rudd stood alone, the message would not have been felt so deeply. In addition, the apology was a clear step towards making reparations for the past, which gave substance to the statement and its validity. Judith Fleenor added that ritual is only powerful if it is meaningful to the persons participating in the ritual. The ritual then shifts the consciousness to a higher level. In response to this, David Crumm spoke of the legacies and dysfunction that follow trauma, such as alcoholism and abuse. He agreed that the apology is like an open door to 'what is next?'

Dr. Mahboobeh Ayatollahzadeh warned of the dangers that accompany apology: "No matter how sincere the apology, you are asking the victim to make the last sacrifice; to let go of pain that is part of their dignity...To let go of that pain you have to have hope and faith that this will never happen again. Not to you or to anyone else...What is apology to one people, if you are to create another group of people that will also go through that." Apology is dangerous if it helps us to let go of the past. Judith Fleenor commented that forgiveness does not mean we have to forget. Forgiveness is about letting go of hate, and allowing oneself to begin the work of healing.

Tamar Miller then asked the group to consider what issues the documentary raised for Abrahamic work. Being a strong believer in the trickle up/ ground up process of social transformation, Yehezkel Landau related his knowledge of the many years of grassroots activities, of intergroup dialogues and relations that helped lead to this Australian apology. Earlier, Victor Begg spoke of the upcoming election and the possibility of the first ever African American President. He felt that the election alone could speak volumes of America's readiness to reconcile on the level of race relations. Yehezkel, however, was apprehensive about believing one leader could change a country of 300 million people. "No matter what happens at the top level, our grassroots and midlevel work has to continue, because it takes years to change the paradigm and to accomplish what is happening in Australia." Tamar Miller underscores the essential need for political leadership coupled with work at the grassroots level, and that they can inform, inspire, and authorize each other.

In response to Tamar's inquiry, Imam Faheem Shuaibe read a prayer he found in the journals that are kept in each room of the Season's resort. The purpose of these journals is for guests to share their thoughts on time spent there. This particular excerpt written in the journal in 1994 spoke to Imam Shuaibe:

The Brick by Michael Quoist

The bricklayer laid a brick on the bed of cement. Then, with a precise stroke of his trowel, spread another layer. And, without a by-your-leave, laid on another brick. The foundations grew visibly, the building rose, tall and strong, to shelter the families. I thought, Lord, of that poor brick buried in the darkness at the base of the big building. No one sees it, but it accomplishes its task, and the other bricks need it. Lord, what difference whether I am on the rooftop or in the foundations of your building, as long as I stand faithfully at the right place?

The individual who had shared this prayer continued “Rather a brick or a stone, a beam or mortar, all are needed and have great value...” Imam Shuaibe connected this to AFR by suggesting that we are a brick in the foundation for something that may not come until a hundred years from now. We need understanding that our work takes time and patience. We may be that first brick, but someone needs to lay it.⁴

After a short break, the morning session continued with Joseph Montville outlining the purpose and goals of the Abrahamic Family Reunion through a presentation of the theory of transformation and reconciliation, a discussion of healing history, and Track Two narratives.⁵

PURPOSE

- Create a model for Abrahamic connections
- Share resources from our own work
- Contact and build network of organizations that are morally, emotionally and intellectually committed to the transformation of the Abrahamic community.
- From these connections - find a way to deal with underlying issues and history of Abrahamic relations and take interactions to a deeper level.

Abrahamic relations need to reach a level where groups can confront difficult issues, such as the Middle East conflict. However, we also must identify what is needed to handle the pain that comes with delving into our shared histories, and then what is needed to transform relationships?

⁴ Imam Shuaibe also referenced the book “The Cathedral Mind” which speaks of the many years it takes to build a cathedral. “A father may begin the work as a stone mason, he would teach the trade and then pass on the commitment to his son. Everyone works knowing that they are going to die before the cathedral is built, but the intention is there. As long as we continue generation after generation, the cathedral is going to be built.”

⁵ Please read Joseph Montville’s *Jewish Muslim Relations: Middle East*, in Salman Akhtar (ed.), *The Couch & the Crescent: Crosscurrents between Islam & Psychoanalysis*. (Ch. 12)

Joseph Montville shared 'The Apology' video because it speaks of the immense power of acknowledgement and contrition. "What is amazing about this (PM apology) statement is the whole acknowledgement of the long list of wrongs. You do not have a strong apology unless it is specifically documented what it is you are apologizing for." A lot of Montville's past work has been focused on documenting the Christian debt to the Jews in Europe. Christians have not gotten to the point of acknowledging the role of Christendom as the prime force of New Testament anti-Judaic language and later cultural and political anti-Semitism, which is why it is an important factor in the AFR.⁶

The underlying theory for AFR is tied to developmental psychology which states that human beings crave recognition, acceptance and respect. Montville says that "Human beings need to be valued and respected. Not because they want to feel warm and fuzzy but because when we are threatened, we have all sorts of reactions in defense of ourselves. Groups do the same thing. If you want to deal with mending relationships, you have to look at 'where does it hurt,' and 'when did it happen?'" It is acknowledgement and a walking through history that will get us to the deeper level of interaction, and possibly reconciliation that AFR is seeking. "The process of self examination is essential to this work. If you want to transform a relationship and make it less dangerous you have to tread carefully in order to take the violence, anger and hatred and transform it into a relationship of respect and possibly even love.

In summary, Tamar Miller spoke of the AFR theory being grounded and informed by political psychology of how to heal historical wounds that are passed from one generation to the next. She added that AFR highlights the positive side of our shared histories. At the same time, acknowledgement and working through of some of the ugly historical precedents need to take place in order to heal ingrained traumatic wounds. Members of the AFR network achieve these ends in many ways, through shared community service, communal prayer, education, ritual, etc.

GOALS

- Create a network of peacemakers
- Create a body of academic and cognitive work that fills knowledge gaps
- Create hope and opportunity to work together in our respective cities collaboratively -
Do deeper psychological work with our communities
- Identify ways to heal traumatic wounds

Commenting on this, Joseph Montville said that AFR is dealing with fear and hatred. "Many Jews have a memory that is powerful and that goes beyond the imagination. There is a major

⁶ Joseph Montville recommends watching 'Constantine's Sword' an exploration of the dark side of Christianity, following acclaimed author and former priest James Carroll on a journey of remembrance and reckoning. <http://constantinessword.com/>

responsibility for Christians to do our part of this healing process.”⁷ To start, Abrahamic communities must spend time together to develop trust and respectful engagement. An aim of AFR is to elicit honest and truthful discussion which overtime may allow for the development of solid relationships.

Joseph Montville feels an important component of such work is for Arabs and Muslims to witness Christian – Jewish relations. Jews need to hear from Christians, as well as Arabs and Muslims that they understand. But Arabs and Muslims need Christians to layout and detail the enormity of their responsibility for actions against Jews, and to also appeal to their compassion. A significant product of AFR is a written project on the largely shared prosocial values of the three faiths.⁸ Lynn Kunkle is the author of these papers and they are all focused on society’s moral responsibility to care for the needy and the caring for strangers.⁹ Deeply rooted in all Abrahamic traditions is a humanistic basis for love and compassion for caring for the least among us and for community.

At this point, Joseph Montville wanted to share his own personal dreams for the AFR project. On a personal note, he mentioned that twenty years ago he had an interfaith blessing for his daughter. In attendance were a Sunni and a Shiite Muslim, a rabbi and a Christian cleric. The blessing took place at the Washington National Cathedral, with just his immediate family to witness. He stated that it has long been his desire to find ways to transform these interfaith relationships.

Bringing us back to the aim of the session, which is to outline the purpose, goals and mandate of AFR, Dulce Murphy and Tamar Miller shared their understanding of the project.

⁷ A brief discussion on Christian Zionism was taken up at this point. Concerns that Yehezkel raised were a reaction to Joe Montville’s article, referring to Christianity as the Father or progenitor of Zionism. He said: "We can look at Zionism as a natural response to prolonged or recurrent trauma, but also as the outcome of centuries of prophetic and messianic Jewish visions of a return to the Land...also as a 20th-century expression of Jewish national self-determination...not simply, or mainly, as a response to Christian anti-Semitism, for that would reduce Zionism to anti-anti-Semitism, a double negative rather than a positive or creative initiative. What would be healing for Jews, especially those in Israel, is not Christian Zionists cheering them on to some kind of "victory" but, instead, an empathetic stance on the part of Christians and Muslims, recognizing that Jews were homesick for their ancestral land, that they deserved to be welcomed home as long-lost spiritual siblings, and that they should be seen as partners in the consecration of God's Holy Land. Such spiritual re-cognition could still acknowledge the injustices inflicted on Palestinians by the Zionist homecoming--and Israeli Jews should apologize to Palestinians for their displacement and dispossession--but it would also acknowledge the spiritual dimension of Israel as a reborn Jewish commonwealth, especially in the wake of the Shoah. On such a spiritual foundation a different kind of politics could emerge, uniting Jews, Muslims, and Christians in common purpose."

Rabbi Or Rose added that it is also necessary to look at Jews throughout the centuries in Muslim countries, specifically the case of Maimonides.

⁸ Contact vbrake@abrahamicfamilyreunion.org for copies of these documents.

⁹ Lynn Kunkle is an assistant professor at American University.

AFR is an opportunity to:

- Bring together Muslims, Christians and Jews in 6 US cities. Some of the organizations involved so far include:
 - San Francisco – Track II: Institute for Citizen Diplomacy, Presidio Interfaith Group, Grace Cathedral, Abraham’s Vision and others
 - Los Angeles – New Ground, HaMifgash: an On-going Conversation Among Jewish Intellectuals
 - Boston – Harvard Divinity School, Boston Theological Consortium, Center for Jewish-Muslim Relations, Center for the Study of Jewish-Christian-Muslim Relations, Merrimack College
 - New York - Union Theological Seminary, Seton Hall University
 - Washington DC – Washington National Cathedral – Center for Global Justice & Reconciliation, Clergy Beyond Borders, Washington Theological Consortium
 - Detroit – Reuniting the Children of Abraham
- Have a repository of information, share resources and to collaboratively disseminate it.
- Offer a model of reconciliation
- Have a setting to raise and discuss difficult issues, and plan how they can be approached
- Share our needs in order to do Abrahamic work
- Base our work on theory

David Crumm added that he envisions AFR as the connective tissue, a catalytic critique, a network and a distribution point.¹⁰ “As a connective tissue AFR can make recommendations based on the types of groups and focuses interfaith gatherings are taking. AFR can point out blind spots and also share their highlights.” As a ‘connector’ we will bring together ‘folks who are already building pieces of the structure we’re hoping to see.’ In his own work, David hears pleas and a need for some sort of connective group that can quickly and easily connect groups with voices of reason, wisdom and peace, specifically on Abrahamic issues. “In the 300,000 congregations in the U.S. of various religious affiliations, there are many groups wanting to “know more” and “host a

¹⁰ David Crumm also mentioned Rabbi Michael Cooke, a New Testament scholar who has written an interactive book which speaks of the conflicts Christians and Jews face with the New Testament. Cooke suggests how Jews should engage with the NT. See *Modern Jews Engage the New Testament: Enhancing Jewish Well-Being in a Christian Environment* (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights) and *Companion Figures: A Visual Aid for Teaching Modern Jews Engage the New Testament* (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights, August 2008). One other text that David highly suggests is *InterActive Faith*, “a superb guidebook to building interfaith relationships at the moment.”

program" -- but precious few resources for them. Filling that gap are things like a free Obsession DVD you can show "about Islam and the Middle East." So, strategies that will not only design big programs -- but also will provide the connector point for grassroots groups that want to "learn more," "host a speaker," "share a program" -- that's going to be an urgent need."

Before breaking for lunch, Tamar Miller asked participants to each write on the large boards 1) their needs in order to do Abrahamic work, and 2) Resources, Gifts, and Talents they have to share with the AFR network. Their answers are outlined below in the following two tables:

What is needed to take part in Abrahamic work?

- Relationships/allies/colleagues
- Network of like-interested leaders
- Spiritual/contemplative exercises for Abrahamic encounters
- Suggestions on how we can discuss the Middle East
- Mapping
- Muslim academic/seminar partners
- Focus models
- Critical tools
- User-friendly kits
- Training modules for workshops, for different populations, etc.
- Lab for ideas and innovation
- Clear group facilitation model that allows for:
 - 1) Teaching of/discovery of historical context
 - 2) Discussion of various interpretations of those context
 - 3) Understanding of shared values
 - 4) Release of hurts and fears (known & unknown)
 - 5) Building bridges
 - 6) Needs for people of various understanding levels
- Clarity on the AFR model/theory, the network, the resources, the needs and the future
- Clarity on when and if the AFR purpose is to 'problem find' and/or 'problem solve'
- What is expected of those of us connected to the network
- Balance between the AFR goal, focus, control and being open ended with flexibility.
- Tagline for the paradigm which supports/triggers the methodology (e.g. neurplasticity: neurons that fire together wire together)
- Keep in mind the political sphere of this work; relation & dynamic
- Actions, Impact, Change
- Funds, fundraising, money to fund moving from combative to cooperative
- Technical assistance/knowledge, capacity building

Resources to Share – Gifts/Talents

Judith Fleenor: Organizational and facilitation skills, Systems Thinking, Compassion

Aaron Hahn Tapper: Case examples, i.e. practical applications

Mary Haddad: Stories, Community/People

Yehezkel Landau:

- Course Syllabi – ex: Building Abrahamic Partnerships
- Reflections/Essays/Sermons
- Middle East Reconciliation Models /Experience www.friendsofopenhouse.org
- ‘Healing the Holy Land’ Research Report: www.usip.org/reports

Brenda Rosenberg: 5 Replicable Programs

- Reuniting the Children of Abraham
- In Our Own Voices
- Building Bridges with Books
- Interfaith Partners
- Wisdom

Tamar Miller:

- Creative ideas TO DO
- Training in Group Dynamics and politics of diversity
- Yoga Practice
- Middle East Expertise, Israeli-Palestinian people to people peacemaking network
- International network

Victor Begg: Congregations/ Organizations

- Michigan Roundtable for Diversity & Inclusion
- Interfaith Partners
- National Federation for Community & Justice.

Tom Block: Creative manners of expressing the issues and reaching the wider public

Evan Anderson:

- An organization with great convening and symbolic power
- Access to national/international interfaith leaders
- Access to the national church
- Access to/relationships with Iranian Shiia clerics

David Crumm:

- Read the Spirit www.readthespirit.com
- Media – Hollywood
- Government Resources – State Dept, State Agencies
- Foundations
- Public

Imam Shuaibe: Techniques for

- Problem identification
- Problem solving
- Group Collaboration

After lunch, Tamar Miller opened up the floor for each participant to offer creative ideas on best practices, as well as concerns, in doing Abrahamic work:

BEST PRACTICES

- From his own experience, David Crumm has found that creating a hermetically sealed place, or safe space, is key for groups that are trying to reach a deeper level of interaction. One way to do this is to start a gathering with shared agreements, creating a contract from these, and having everyone sign. When individuals feel certain they are safe to share anything and everything that may be raised around tough subjects, and there is no possibility of their discussion leaving that room. This setting allows for connecting and opening up at a level that is not usually possible.
- Imam Faheem Shuaibe and Gordon Wheeler had a discussion during the morning break, that outlined the potential of learning about ourselves through interactions with the 'other.' Imam Shuaibe says that it is possible to learn about oneself and the other, by hearing another's perception of you. Gordon continued by saying "there is a part of my story that I need you to tell me." By hearing the complete truth from another individual you learn more about yourself. Their feedback on how they have experienced you can be illuminating. For example, one could say "here is what you get to do that I do not get to do." It is the idea that "I need the other, to know myself." Imam Shuaibe adds that we need to become mirrors of each other. If these mirrors are distorted, we can then begin to clean them together, so that they become clear reflections.
- A barrier often seen in Abrahamic work is the rehearsal of victim scripts, says David Bossman. As Joseph Montville mentioned earlier, individuals crave recognition of wrongs done. A side effect of this in a group setting is the comparative victimization among most individuals. 'Who is the biggest victim?' How then can facilitators deal with these comparisons? David suggests that before reaching topics of victimization, that groups are first taken through exercises that discuss privileges. Within this setting, individuals are better able to recognize the validity of all victim scripts and privileges, without retreating into a comparison of who has had it worse.
- If we remind individuals that God's greatest revelation is *us*, and not the bible, Qu'ran, or other holy books, then the greatest task becomes interacting with each other.
- In her work with the Children of Abraham, Brenda Rosenberg has found theater art to be more useful than dialogue. The children involved have a sense of speaking out and being heard. They are able to tell their stories and hear each other's stories, and then tell stories back to one another. While stories will vary, the feeling of having been heard, can get you to those next steps of deeper interaction.
- David Crumm says our work should start with a self assessment.

CONCERNS

- A concern that Judith Fleenor has come across in her work is the hidden beliefs of groups, that often times are not even recognized by those who have them. An example of this would be what Christians will talk about amongst other Christians, regarding Islam or Judaism which they would never share in an Abrahamic interaction. She thinks AFR should be having these deep conversations on such beliefs with those professionals already doing Abrahamic work.
- In relation to this subject, Yehezkel Landau mentioned the difficult issues that arise in intra-faith work. He has experienced a lot of Jewish resistance to the interfaith work he does, whether in Israel or America. One concern for Abrahamic work is the resistance we can and will receive from our own communities. Secondly, Yehezkel has faced problems with site visits, when bringing Christians, Jews and Muslims to each other's respective worship sites. While the goal of such visits is to learn of a different tradition, discussions in these groups can quickly turn from the spiritual to the political. A lesson he has learned from this work is that AFR relations require a certain sensitivity that lay people and even clerics may not have.
- Victor Begg related that in his experience with Abrahamic relations there is a lot of mistrust, but at the same time a lot of desire for interaction. The question is how do we overcome the mistrust that can prevent many exchanges from beginning.
- As an artist, Tom Block does much of his interfaith work on an individual basis. He has sometimes faced resistance to collaboration from individuals of other faiths. The perception of him, a Jew, working with someone of a different tradition, can have certain connotations for members of those other faiths. Because of certain power dynamics, their interfaith relationship can be construed as something negative. It may be believed that interfaith work on an equal basis is not possible. Although Tom's intention has not been to provoke these negative perceptions, just the anticipation of its effect within another faith community has stopped certain collaborative projects from occurring.
- A tension Rabbi Or Rose faces in this work is the representation of ourselves as a particular identity (in this case, Christian, Muslim or Jew) versus our plural and complex self. In Abrahamic work we come to the table as a member of one of these traditions, but we should not forget that within every individual there is a plurality of identities. This can certainly affect how we present ourselves in Abrahamic groups, and also how groups will perceive us.
- Dr. Mahboobeh Ayatollahzadeh says one's alliance and loyalty is often questioned within one's own religious community when you freely interact with people of different traditions. "Does interfaith work make you disloyal to your own faith?" Are you still a good Muslim or Jew?
- Aaron Hahn Tapper sees the tension between contact theory and the social identity theory in all Abrahamic work. In order not to get caught at one end of the spectrum of the other, our focus needs to be on the individual and the collective. You can transcend.
- How do you approach competing narratives that seem impossible to reconcile?

For the later afternoon session, Tom Block presented several of his past projects as a prophetic activist artist.¹¹ To see images of recent works and read his personal artist statement, you can visit his website: tomblock.com. His projects include: 1) Human Rights Painting Project 2) Cousins Project 3) Response to Machiavelli 4) Shalom/Salaam: The Surprising Tale of Mystical Entanglement.¹² Monday ended with another informal reception, an iftar dinner after sunset, and a viewing of *Sister Rose's Passion*, which was followed by a brief discussion.¹³

During the discussion of *Sister Rose*, many tough issues related to Abrahamic work arose. Rev. Mary Haddad first reflected on *Sister Rose's* simple statement that "Jesus was a Jew, How could we not love his people?" Unfortunately, many churches downplay the Jewishness of Jesus, which could indicate one knowledge gap that AFR could help fill. In response to Rev. Haddad's observations, Dr. Ayatollah spoke of how the opening scene of the documentary where Christians were asked: 'Who killed Jesus?' Everyone questioned answered "the Jews." It is not uncommon for Christians to believe this, as they are not knowledgeable of biblical times. Movies such as Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ*, help to perpetuate this belief that Jews are 'Christkillers.'

The discussion then turned to the very different perspective Muslims have on the death of Jesus. Many Muslims do not believe it was Jesus who died on the cross, but someone of his likeness who perished. It is believed that God would not have let his favorite prophet be subjected to that. The varying takes on this historical event further complicates the possibility for Muslims in taking part and mediating interfaith work surrounding this volatile issue in Christian – Jewish relations.

The Tuesday morning session on September 8th began with Yehezkel Landau leading the group in contemplative practice with a psycho-spiritual exercise and discussion focused on Abraham and his sons. Yehezkel presented the scenario of Isaac and Ishmael meeting in a cave to bury their father. After a short period of silence and self reflection, participants were asked to envision how the scenarios would play out, and what the conversation between these estranged brothers might sound like. Some of themes that were raised by this exercise included reconciliation, obedience, apology, family healing, mental health, revenge, Cain and Abel's relationship as brothers and its connection to these brothers, Isaac as proactive peacemaker.

¹¹ A copy of Tom Blocks presentation can be found here on AbrahamicFamilyReunion.org. Accompanying audio is also available upon request.

¹² Soon to be published as a book.

¹³ *Sister Rose* was a passionate advocate for purging all anti-Judaic language from Catholic catechisms, liturgy and other publications. AFR uses a 38 minute documentary *Sister Rose's Passion* on her struggles which bore fruit in Vatican II in 1965. See <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0420195/> for a description of the documentary.

Tuesday afternoon was dedicated to a group interview of Project Director Joseph Montville (JVM) in order to answer lingering questions about AFR work. The table below offers some highlights from that interaction.

An Interview with AFR Project Director, Joseph Montville

Tamar Miller lead the interview session with asking ‘What is AFR?’

JVM: The Abrahamic Family Reunion aims to symbolically and actually bringing together in the real world, Muslims, Christians and Jews based on a therapeutic approach to understanding where each community has been hurt, and is hurting the other communities; and from this, then trying to heal those hurts.

Tamar: What kinds of words and concepts does AFR offer for participants to take out into the world of Abrahamic work?

JVM: AFR is developing ways to understand our history and how we have gotten to this point, including why 9/11 happened, what inspired it, and why America reacted the way it did, with such shock and surprise. It is a basic psychological, and therapeutic approach to understanding why people are violent, what causes people to be violent. It’s the idea of the community as self, and the psychoanalysis needed to understand our histories and how they determine our actions. Understanding history gives us the option to choose how we react to it.

Tamar: How does this vision translate to day to day work? What do you see the AFR network coming together to do?

JVM: My hope is that everyone who is engaged in dialogue and citizen initiatives will help present what the threats and struggles are in Abrahamic work, as well as the steps to overcoming them. What we need is several levels of discourse in the Abrahamic community.

AFR can also connect communities, as we have done with Christian groups who were looking for Jewish and Muslim counterparts in their cities. Once their communities come together, there are a number of issues raised. AFR can offer starting points and ways to approach difficult topics. The AFR website is going to offer many educational materials that can be used in these group settings.

Tamar: The vision is of a loosely connected social network of people and organizations who will support each other and share their resources, gifts and best practices. The political psychology approach employs numerous tools, everything from empathy to trigger films, group process that navigates difficult conversations, experiential exercises, and even contemplative practices; which allows people to reach a quieter place where understanding, apology and forgiveness become possible.

After the interview, the floor was opened up for participants to share their current work and its possible connection to the future of the Abrahamic Family Reunion. Brenda Rosenberg of *Reuniting the Children of Abraham* provided the following:

Understanding Relationships	
WHAT DESTROYS	WHAT ENHANCES
Impatience	Patience
Dishonesty	Honesty
Anger, violence, force	Compassion
What works best for self only	What works best for both
Dominance	Equality
Confrontation and control	Cooperation and collaboration
Preoccupation with an enemy	Refusing to be the enemy
Diminishing, demonizing, dehumanizing "the other"	Respecting, recognizing, and appreciating "the other"
Withdrawing from the relationship during crisis	Staying in relationship in crisis and using creativity to invent a better future

Following this was a discussion of psychological-political dynamics based on a list supplied by Tamar Miller of some of the salient behaviors that can occur in interfaith dialogue.

Behaviors			
Acknowledge	Cross Boundaries	Honor	Participate silently
Aggress	Defend	Hope	Polarize
Agitate	Demonize	Injure	Pontificate
Alienate	Deny	Intellectualize	Project
Apologize	Dignify	Interrupt	Protect
Ask	Distort	Keep Boundaries	Rationalize
Attack	Empathize	Keep Score	Rescue
Avoid	Fix	Keep Secrets	Scapegoat
Blame	Forgive	Leave	Share Wisdom
Challenge	Generalize	Lie	Silence others
Compete	Generate	Love	Spiritualize
Complain	Heal	Naysay	Split loyalties
Connect	Help	Nurture	Teach
	Hide		"Yes but"

As he had done twice previously, Yehezkel Landau began Wednesday morning by playing sacred music; a recording from each faith tradition. The group was asked to meditate on the musical selections and then share brief reactions. Yehezkel shared that “listening to Christian sacred music, such as Gregorian chants, helps me to appreciate the sacred essence of Christian faith. It also helps to heal the part of me that might otherwise remain wounded, by reliving the trauma of Jewish persecution at the hands of Christians over many centuries.” Before ending the workshop that morning, David Bossman did a presentation on Lewis Mudge’s new text *The Gift of Responsibility: The Promise of Dialogue Among Christians, Jews and Muslims*.¹⁴

Throughout the four days of discussion many suggested next steps for AFR were raised. Listed below are a few of those suggestions.

SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS

- Explore ways that Muslims can assist Jews and Christians navigate and resolve the conflict and issues raised in Sister Rose’s Passion. Similarly, identify ways for each respective faith to help intervene in conflicts across other faith traditions. i.e. Christians assist in Jewish – Muslim tensions, etc.
- Address Jewish concerns over the comparison of the Nazi Holocaust to that of the case of Palestine. Jews are hurt by comparison, but Palestinians see similarities and opportunity to get message across.
- In reference to James Carrol’s suggestion that we must first come to terms with our own issues; AFR should examine ways that faith traditions can go through self assessment before attempting interfaith work.
- Offer consultations to organizations on what is useful for their level of engagement
- Offer easily accessible resources and meaningful interchanges via the web.
- Publish an AFR handbook and database
- Determine how educational materials can be liberating for interested groups.
- Create policy statement on Israel/Palestine, and offer ways to deal with this tough subject. In addition, suggests ways that this topic does not distract Abrahamic work from other issues.
- Hold a conference to bring together members of the network, and to help participants comprehend the scope of AFR.

¹⁴ A copy of David Bossman’s powerpoint can be found on AbrahamicFamilyReunion.org

Appendix

Abrahamic Family Reunion - Participant Bios

Evan P. Anderson is Deputy Director of International Reconciliation and Peacemaking (IRP) at the Center for Global Justice and Reconciliation. Mr. Anderson comes to the Center with experience in individual and organizational counseling, conflict resolution, and government. In his capacity as Deputy Director of the IRP, Mr. Anderson is actively involved in peacemaking and reconciliation initiatives around the globe. His work emphasizes inter-religious dialogue, interfaith relationship building, Track II diplomacy, and respectful engagement between estranged parties as mechanisms for creating peace and reconciliation. He is currently involved in projects that are helping to build bridges between Islam and Christianity including initiatives supporting the healing of US-Iran relations.

Before his appointment as Deputy Director of the IRP program, Mr. Anderson worked as a counselor and management consultant and assisted organizations in addressing issues pertaining to conflict resolution, personnel management, and organizational mission.

Mr. Anderson also has eleven years experience in state government, having served as a policy advisor to two governors in the state of Florida and as a cabinet aide to Florida's Education Commissioner.

Mr. Anderson holds an M.S. in Counseling and post-master's certificate in Organizational Counseling, both from the Johns Hopkins University.

Dr. Mahboobeh Ayatollahzadeh (Dr. Ayat) received her Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology from Shiraz University majoring in Educational Psychology with a minor in Sociology. She graduated in 1984 from the University of Akron's Department of Counseling and Special Education, obtaining a Master's of Arts degree majoring in Special Education. In May of 2004 her dissertation, entitled "Emergent Literacy in Iranian Families," earned her a Ph.D. in School Psychology from the Department of Educational and School Psychology. Dr. Ayatollahzadeh has also been an educational consultant for Iranian public and private schools for a number of years. She is the former Associate Dean of Academic Affairs at the College of Education, University of Tehran, and a faculty member at the same University as well as a research associate with Iran's Welfare Organization. She has worked with children and young adults in different settings in the United States for the past 10 years. From 1999-2004 she worked for the North East Sullivan School Corporation as the lead psychologist for seven elementary and high schools. From 2004-08 she served as the Principal of the Muslim Community School in Potomac, Maryland. Dr. Ayatollahzadeh has written for numerous publications, in both Persian and English, and has lectured in professional and religious seminars in Iran and the United States. She has also conducted many teacher and parent training sessions for different schools. Currently, she works as a school psychologist in Indianapolis, IN.

Victor Ghalib Begg is a businessman who spends most of his time in community service and as a Muslim activist at the local, national & international level.

Founder - Muslim Unity Center Mosque in Bloomfield Hills.

Co-founded Council of Islamic Organizations of Michigan in the late 80s.

Co-founded Interfaith Partners in the aftermath of 9/11/2001 bringing Muslim, Christian and Jewish congregations together for better understanding and cooperative projects.

Co-Chair, Michigan Round Table for Diversity and Inclusion.

Member of the New Detroit Inc., Race Relations Coalition.

Member Mid-West Muslim-Catholic dialog, co-hosted by ISNA.

Frequent op-ed writer in the Detroit newspapers on Muslim issues. Appeared on FOX network, NPR and CBS.

Was elected to the Bloomfield Hills Board of Education, served 4 year term.

Served on the Community Service Commission, appointed by Gov. Engler, for 8 years and on the Blue Ribbon Commission on Michigan Gaming.

Serves on Governor Granholm's Interfaith Panel.

Tom Block I am an artist, writer and activist best known for my work that delves into the search for spiritual meaning in our era. My series include *Shalom/Salaam Project*, *Human Rights Painting Project*, *Cousins Public Art Project*, *Response to Machiavelli Project* and *In the Garden of the Mystical Redoubt*.

I have presented the following talks at conferences and universities: *Prophetic Activist Art*; *Artist as Shaman in an Age of Uncertainty*; *Towards a Mystical Understanding of Artistic Process*; *Below the Radar: The Spiritual Impulse Buried Within Post-Modern Art*; *Machiavellian Resistance*; *Identity as Conflict*; *War as Love: How the Spiritual Quest has been Co-opted to Sell War* and a series of talks on the influence of Sufism on the development of Jewish mysticism.

I have exhibited my artwork at galleries, universities and museums throughout the United States and Europe, as well as being collected by public and private collections around the United States and Europe.

www.tomblock.com

David Bossman, Ph.D. is Professor in the Graduate Department of Jewish-Christian Studies at Seton Hall University as well as founding director of the Sister Rose Thering Endowment for Jewish-Christian Studies. The SRT Endowment provides tuition scholarships for educators taking graduate courses in Jewish-Christian and Holocaust Studies at Seton Hall. He has served as Editor of the quarterly journal, *Biblical Theology Bulletin*, since 1981. His research and publications

explore cross-cultural models for biblical interpretation as well as for current inter-religious discourse in a pluralistic society. He teaches inclusive religion courses in the Abrahamic traditions at Seton Hall as well as the College of Charleston, SC. He led a workshop on Jesus in the Abrahamic traditions at the Esalen Institute last March and is scheduled for one there on Jesus in the Muslim tradition, Jan 2-4, 2009.

Vanessa Brake holds a M.S. from the Institute for Conflict Analysis & Resolution at George Mason University. As a graduate student she worked at the Center for World Religions, Diplomacy & Conflict Resolution, which engages in practice, research and education concerning the contributions of world religions to conflict and to peace. Her capstone master's project dealt with the creation of an interactive curriculum for middle school students, based on the nonviolent principles of Martin Luther King Jr. She also has bachelor degrees in psychology and religious studies from Arizona State University.

Currently, Vanessa works as research assistant to Joseph Montville on the Abrahamic Family Reunion. She is also an office manager and nonviolence trainer with Pace e Bene Nonviolence Service in Oakland, CA.

David Crumm

For more than 30 years, David Crumm has been a journalist -- specializing mainly in covering the impact of religion in our world and our daily lives. He also is an author and filmmaker. And, in late 2007, he became co-founder of the ReadTheSpirit project – a new online home for important voices in religion and spirituality. ReadTheSpirit also is a professional network of writers, filmmakers and artists exploring spiritual themes and, in 2008, opened a publishing arm that already has produced a half dozen books.

Haim Dov Beliak is the Executive Director of HaMifgash: An On-Going Conversation Among Jewish Intellectuals. The most recent project of HaMifgash is the new web site: www.JewsOnFirst.org which confronts the "Christianization" movement's attempt to nullify the First Amendment of the Constitution. Together with Jane Hunter this project seeks to provide information and suggestions for actions to safe guard our freedoms.

HaMifgash is sponsored the first formal dialogue between and among Jews and Indians (Native Americans) on January 8, 2006.

Together with Jane Hunter, Haim co –founded The Coalitions for Justice in Hawaiian Gardens and Jerusalem (www.stopmoskowitz.org <<http://www.stopmoskowitz.org>>)

Beliak was born in a DP Camp in Munich, Germany and grew up in Mason City, Iowa and Phoenix, Arizona. In 1988-90 Beliak was as a Jerusalem Fellow in Jerusalem, Israel. He is a member of the Progressive Jewish Alliance (PJA) and vice-president of Interfaith Communities United for Justice and Peace (ICUJP).

Judith Fleenor is a Religious Science minister with the United Centers for Spiritual Living. She is on the Marin Interfaith Council's Education and Celebrations Team. She is a panel moderator for the Islamic Network Group's Interfaith Speakers Bureau. She is an active member of both the programs committee and finance committee at the Interfaith Center at the Presidio in San Francisco. Prior to receiving her masters in Consciousness Studies from the Holmes Institute and moving her career toward ministry and Interfaith work, Judith held various roles in project management and technology training for companies domestically and internationally. Highlights of her career include: being on the opening team for Euro Disney, doing a Sale Force Automation rollout for Seimens/Rolm, creating the policy and procedures and training schedule for the Internet to the desk top roll-out for Seagate Technologies, and working as the Worldwide Director of Training for Netscape Communications/AOL.

The Rev. Canon Mary E. Haddad was born and raised in Canada. She earned her B.A. in Communications from the University of Windsor and worked for ten years in television for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. Unexpectedly laid off, Mary subsequently worked as a publicist for the University of Windsor, owned and ran a French café, and, briefly, sold cars in Detroit. In 1992, she moved to California as the live-in verger at All Saint's Episcopal Church. In 1997, Mary began studies at the General Theological Seminary and, upon graduation in 2000, became Associate Rector at St. Bartholomew's Church.

Mary visited Jerusalem for a ten-day seminar in 1994 and again for a conference on Christian Zionism in 2004. While at St. Bart's, she was a Steering Committee member of Jerusalem 2000, a fund-raising campaign, and formed a grassroots Middle-East advocacy group called "Just Peace."

She began her ministry as Canon Pastor at Grace Cathedral in San Francisco in January 2007.

Dr. Aaron J. Hahn Tapper, is the Founder and Co-Executive Director of Abraham's Vision, a conflict transformation organization running programs for American-based populations of Jews, Muslims, Israelis, and Palestinians. Born and raised in Philadelphia, he is currently an Assistant Professor in the Theology and Religious Studies Department of the University of San Francisco, holding the Swig Chair of Judaic Studies, and is the university's founding director of the Swig Program in Jewish Studies and Social Justice, the first formal academic program of its kind in the United States. Currently living outside San Francisco with his wife, Rabbi Laurie Hahn Tapper, and son Isaiah Everett, he previously lived in the Middle East for five years—four years in Jerusalem and one year in Cairo—and traveled extensively in Jordan, Morocco, Lebanon, and Syria. Aaron received a BA from the Johns Hopkins University, majoring in Psychology, a Master's degree from Harvard Divinity School, focusing on World Religions, and a PhD in Comparative Religions from the University of California, Santa Barbara. Since 1990, Aaron has been involved in Jewish education, shifting his focus towards Jewish-Arab and Jewish-Muslim education in 1998. In September 2008 he also became the Co-Executive Director of the Center for Transformative Education, a new educational initiative aiming to create empowering educational programs to transform societies into their potential, which he co-founded.

Walid Abdul Jawad is an Arabic media consultant and Middle East political analyst contributing to the public and private sectors. His experience in the Washington DC area spans over 10 years of news reporting and political analysis for a number of media organizations including the Associated Press Television News (APTN), Saudi TV, Al-Ekhbaria, and many others.

Walid covered the White House and State Department regularly and hosted a number of weekly TV and radio shows. His role over the years has shifted increasingly toward the other side of the table as a guest expert on media and conflict in the Middle East on channels such as the BBC, Al-Hurrah, MBC radio and others.

Walid has an MS in Conflict Analysis and Resolution and a B.S. in Decision Science and Management Information Systems, George Mason University.

Yehezkel Landau As Faculty Associate, Professor Landau's position is underwritten through 2006 by the Henry Luce Foundation. After earning an A.B. from Harvard University (1971) and an M.T.S. from Harvard Divinity School (1976), Landau made aliyah (immigrated) to Israel in 1978. His work has been in the fields of interfaith education and Jewish-Arab peacemaking. He directed the OZ veSHALOM-NETIVOT SHALOM religious Zionist peace movement in Israel during the 1980's. From 1991 to 2003, he was co-founder and co-director of the OPEN HOUSE Center for Jewish-Arab Coexistence in Ramle, Israel. (See the Web site www.friendsofopenhouse.org) He lectures internationally on Jewish-Christian-Muslim relations and Middle East peace issues, has authored numerous journal articles, co-edited the book *Voices from Jerusalem: Jews and Christians Reflect on the Holy Land* (Paulist Press, 1992), and authored a research report entitled "Healing the Holy Land: Interreligious Peacebuilding in Israel/Palestine" (U.S. Institute of Peace, September 2003, accessible at www.usip.org). Yehezkel is also the director and lead faculty for the Building Abrahamic Partnerships program.

Tamar Miller consults to social change organizations with a focus on the contemporary Middle East. She was co-director of the New England regional office of *The New Israel Fund*; VP Education and one of three founders of an international company, *American Higher Education, inc.*; and Partner in *Middle East Holdings*, a business development firm based in Boston and Dubai. Tamar was Director of Leadership Development and then Executive Director of the *Institute for Social and Economic Policy in the Middle East* at Harvard University. Earlier in her career, she directed social service programs in New York, Jerusalem and Cambridge, MA. for disturbed adolescents, pregnant and parenting addicts, and families of psychiatric patients. She also was a community organizer in Ethiopian, Yemenite, and Moroccan disenfranchised communities in Israel. Tamar holds a B.A. in Philosophy and Judaic Studies, Master of Social Work from Yeshiva University and a Master of Public Administration from Harvard University. She currently is active on the board of directors of *Parents Circle – Bereaved Family Forum*, *IPCRI* (Israel Palestine Center for Research and Information), and the *Alliance for Middle East Peace*.

Joseph Montville is director of Toward the Abrahamic Family Reunion, the Esalen Institute project to promote Muslim-Christian-Jewish reconciliation. He is also Senior Adviser on Interfaith Relations at Washington National Cathedral, and has appointments at American and George Mason Universities. Montville founded the preventive diplomacy program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in 1994 and directed it until 2003. Before that he spent 23 years as a diplomat with posts in the Middle East and North Africa. He also worked in the State Department's Bureaus of Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs and Intelligence and Research, where he was chief of the Near East Division and director of the Office of Global Issues. Montville has held faculty appointments at the Harvard and University of Virginia Medical Schools. He defined the concept of "Track Two," nonofficial diplomacy. Educated at Lehigh, Harvard, and Columbia Universities, Montville is the editor of *Conflict and Peacemaking in Multiethnic Societies* (Lexington Books, 1990) and editor (with Vamik Volkan and Demetrios Julius) of *The Psychodynamics of International Relationships* (Lexington Books, 1990 [vol. I], 1991 [vol. II]).

Dulce W. Murphy, founder and director emeritus of the Esalen Institute Soviet American Exchange Program that began in 1980. Murphy then became the president and executive director of The Russian-American Center (TRAC) in San Francisco, a continuation of the same program. For the past twenty-five years she has been on the cutting edge of non-governmental Russian-American relations. In the spring of 2004, The Russian-American Center changed its name to TRACK TWO: An Institute for Citizen Diplomacy, that expands our mandate as a non-profit organization to include other countries, teaming up with our Russian colleagues to that end. Track-two diplomacy involves non-governmental individuals and groups that aim to fill the moral and intellectual voids of official peacemaking leadership. Track Two's major goal is to re-humanize relations that are dysfunctional. It works to make relationships better.

Rabbi Or Rose is Director of Interfaith and Social Justice Initiatives at Hebrew College. He is the coeditor of "Righteous Indignation: A Jewish Call for Justice" (Jewish Lights Publishing), and a contributing editor to "Tikkun Magazine." Or is currently completing his doctorate in Jewish mysticism at Brandeis University.

Brenda Naomi Rosenberg was the first woman senior vice presidents of fashion for Hudson's Department Stores in Michigan, and went on to hold one of the most powerful positions in the industry as senior VP of fashion merchandizing and marketing for Federated Allied Department Stores. Since 9/11 Brenda has incorporated her creative energy and marketing skills to champion inter faith, inter cultural and inter racial understanding. As co executive producer of "Reuniting the Children of Abraham... tool kit for peace," she has spoken at mosques, churches, synagogues, temples, homes, schools, national and international conferences. Brenda was the first woman, and first Jewish person, to deliver a Ramadan sermon at a mosque in Michigan. Her reconciliation efforts have been featured nationally in a CBS network special, Bridges; the national Muslim T.V. network and featured in numerous publications including front page stories in the Detroit and Minneapolis newspapers.

Imam Faheem Shuaibe is a one of a new breed of indigenous, non-traditional Muslim Scholars. For the past 25 years Faheem Shuaibe has been the Resident Imam of Masjidul Waritheen in Oakland.

Imam Shuaibe addresses diverse audiences across the country on a wide range of topics of religion, world politics, human relationships and societal evolution in all media, radio, television, audio, video and cyberspace.

Imam Faheem consults and advises large and small companies and organizations. He works with religious organizations of all faiths. He is a board member of ING an international interfaith education organization.

Faheem has been part of several distinguished delegations that have taken him around the globe on various educational, religious, interfaith, and peace missions.

He has been married to Yolanda for over 36 years. They have four children and one grandchild and a grandchild on the way.

Imam Shuaibe also serves as Director of the Mohammed Schools of Oakland (primary, elementary, middle, and high school).

Gordon Wheeler, PhD is President and CEO of Esalen Institute in Big Sur, California, and has served since 2001 as a member of Esalen's Board of Trustees. A licensed clinical psychologist with a long experience of practice, teaching, and organizational consulting, Gordon is author or editor of more than a dozen books and over a hundred articles in the field. His work is noted for integrating the Gestalt tradition with relational psychology, with a special focus on lifelong development and education, early childhood, and issues of evolutionary neuropsychology, individualism, gender, culture and values, intersubjectivity, and the dynamics of intimacy and shame. His writings have also been in evolution, values, and cultural psychology, including multi-cultural issues and post-Holocaust studies, as well as several works of fiction; they include numerous translations from French and German, and have themselves been translated into some twenty foreign languages. He teaches and trains clinicians widely around the world, and also serves as Editor and Co-Director of GestaltPress (publishing jointly with Analytic Press). Gordon and his wife Nancy Lunney-Wheeler have eight children and two grandchildren, and make their home in Big Sur and Santa Cruz, California.