FINDS DREAMS OF PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE ARE STILL ALIVE

WHAT'S NEW

SOLIHULL PUPILS MEET BEBA, A SCHOOLGIRL IN WARTIME VIÑA

An online exhibition uncovers the story of World War II through the eyes of a Lithuanian girl. Peter Watts speaks to the teacher bringing it into the classroom

understand because the focus remains on an ordinary little girl. “What struck me was how similar her life was to that of children today, irrespective of time, nationality and faith,” says Ziulkoski. “She talks about her love of swimming, summer camps, reading books, going to the cinema. Because of prejudice, everything was destroyed.”

The exhibition also draws parallels with today’s world. The section on immigration reveals that Beba would not be eligible to move to the United States in 2020. “It helps us see that the Holocaust had tentacles that reached back into the early 1930s and which were to do with subtle shifts in social attitudes,” says exhibition director Jonathan Brent. “Who were the onlookers who sat on their hands? Who were the people who took money to save a little girl and then let her go when the money ran out? What about the fact that America didn’t let Jews in – is that part of the Holocaust? It is about xenophobia, immigration and economic systems. It’s not just about Auschwitz.”

This is precisely why Solihull School believes that Holocaust education is so important for its children. “A bigot isn’t born a bigot, they become a bigot because of the influence of the people around them,” says Pemey. “A school is the only place we have the ability to stop that bigotry taking hold. We’d like to trigger a lifelong passion in students so they play their part in ensuring this rise in intolerance doesn’t happen again.”

“a hike up table mountain and time spent on safari with lions is 100 percent guaranteed to get adolescent minds off politics and onto major ‘kef’ (enjoyment)”

But on his visit to the Galilee, Kaplan visited his Arabic teacher, Manon Asady from Derel al-Assad village, and in a magnanimous moment offered him the free trip. Asady flew to Baltimore, got to know Kaplan’s family, and visited the synagogue. Rabbi Dr Paul Schneider joined the fun, and Galilee Dreamers was born.

The initiative pairs pupils from neighbouring Jewish, Karimeli and Musag with Arab Sakhanin, Pekri, Der-el-Makour and Der el-Assad; municipalities half an hour apart, but in different worlds. Teenagers meet, talk, visit each other’s homes, and then take off together to visit Jewish communities in the USA and South Africa. A hike up Table Mountain and time spent on safari with lions is 100 percent guaranteed to get adolescent minds off politics and onto major “kef” (enjoyment).

American football, rock concerts, and skiing down snowy slopes intermixed with discussions with peers about the need for shared socrates have the same huge impact. Pupils learn about civil rights by visiting historical sites: it all adds up to a life-changing trip.

Today Oranim International School oversees the programme, temporarily on Zoom. This has disadvantages: it’s hard to break bread together through two screens. But Dr Rachel Raviv, director of the programme, is optimistic that when normal returns, the programme will kick in again. In the meantime, connections have been forged. At the end of each trip pupils reflect; one ecstacially cited Gandhi “You must be the change you wish to see in the world.” Another, Ruba Hliehel from Jish village, declared that every problem has a solution and we should not give up. The programme is guaranteed to get adolescent minds off politics and onto major “kef” (enjoyment).

“Galilee Dreamers is at The YIVO Bruce and Francesca Kaplan Centre and we’ll all become Galilee Dreamers.”

Today, half of Israel grieves Rabin, who embodied honesty and put the good of the country ahead of himself. Netanyahu polarizes, creating separate entities, split right down the middle. Religious and secular fight over the right to transport on Shabbat, and over who can get married or buried in the Jewish state. Likudniks brand all dissenters traitors; after almost 50 years of living as a loyal citizen (and sending my husband and kids to the army). I’m called an enemy of the people because I don’t love our leader. Those of us who call Israel home live these issues every day; those of us who don’t can’t imagine the pain. But darkly, in the middle of the dissension, it’s heart-strengthening to see people – people initiatives that, despite all, bridge gaps and forge friendships.

Galilee Dreamers started with Dr Desmond Kaplan being bumped from an overbooked flight to Tel Aviv. When Kaplan, a South African-born psychiatrist who had spent 15 years living in Israel and now resides in Baltimore, USA, was given a compensatory extra ticket, he was thrilled.

Dr Pamela Peled lectures at Beit Berl and the IDC; peledpam@gmail.com

PAMELA PELED

“a hike up table mountain and time spent on safari with lions is 100 percent guaranteed to get adolescent minds off politics and onto major ‘kef’ (enjoyment)”

GALILEE DREAMERS

IN THE FIRST OF OUR REGULAR REPORTS ON LIFE IN ISRAEL, PAMELA PELED FINDS DREAMS OF PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE ARE STILL ALIVE

LETTER FROM ISRAEL

What’s happening

WHAT'S NEW

WHAT'S NEW