



Presents

RECONSIDER

A Reconsider Film



DISTURBING THE PEACE

Running time: 82 mins, Color

Country of Origin: United States, Israel, Palestine,

Languages: English, Arabic and Hebrew w/ English subtitles

disturbingthepeace.bullfrogcommunities.com

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“I wish I had made this documentary.”- Ted Koppel

“I want to live in the world you guys are creating.”- Michael Moore

DISTURBING THE PEACE

The “disturbers of peace” stand for us all. Asking the question “Exactly *Whose* peace are we disturbing?” From Henry David Thoreau, Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks, Nelson Mandela, and Cesar Chavez, to Congressman John Lewis, Malala Yousafzai, Van Jones and Aung San Suu Kyi and so many more all disturbers of peace.

We are all stuck in our own stories, told over the years, often from birth, and often based on cultural perspectives, national and familial narratives and mythologies - which are often passed on as concrete reality or the “truth” of the way things are.

These stories are told to us to keep the “status quo” for current situations faced around the globe: Civil rights based on ethnicity, religion or gender, education for girls, climate change and environmental issues, and the list goes on...

The “Combatants for Peace,” a group of Palestinians and Israelis working together to promote human rights and peace for all, are the only bi-partisan, nonviolent activist group of enemy combatants working together in an ongoing armed conflict in the world today. They are an inspiring modern day example of the importance of using nonviolent solutions to our conflicts.

When we realize our stories will ultimately cause our demise, and the only way out is to challenge it, who will be willing to disturb the peace? Where will you stand?

Disturbing the Peace inspires us to take responsibility for our participation in perpetuating societal structures that no longer work and invites us to reconsider our narratives as we ask - “what kind of world do we want to live in, and what kind of life do we want to create?”

ABOUT THE FILM

Synopsis

Disturbing the Peace is about people born into conflict, sworn to be enemies, who challenged their fate. The film follows everyday people who took extraordinary actions by standing for what they believe in, just like those who came before them – Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks, Gandhi, Nelson Mandela and many others whose names we don't know. The movie challenges all of us – to understand the narratives we live within, to look at our current roles in our societies, and to decide what role we are going to play in creating a more humane world, for all. And it starts with our willingness to disturb the peace.

In a world torn by conflict—in a place where the idea of peace has been abandoned—an energy of determined optimism emerges. When someone is willing to disturb the status quo and stand for the dream of a free and secure world, who will stand with them?

DISTURBING THE PEACE is a story of the human potential unleashed when we stop participating in a story that no longer serves us and, with the power of our convictions, take action to create new possibilities. *DISTURBING THE PEACE* follows former enemy combatants - Israeli soldiers from elite units and Palestinian fighters, many of whom served years in prison - who have joined together to challenge the status quo and say "enough." The film reveals their transformational journeys from soldiers committed to armed battle to nonviolent peace activists, leading to the creation of Combatants for Peace. While based in the Middle East, *DISTURBING THE PEACE* evokes universal themes relevant to us all and inspires us to become active participants in the creation of our world.

Long Synopsis

Filmmakers Stephen Apkon and Andrew Young, along with the Reconsider team, have completed a feature length documentary featuring Combatants for Peace, an innovative and inspiring peace movement founded by former Israeli and Palestinian combatants who have laid down their weapons and embraced non-violent activism to end the bloodshed in the Middle East. The film focuses on the transformative ability of the human spirit as it follows a handful of Combatants for Peace members from both sides of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and traces their transformational journeys from soldiers committed to armed confrontation to non-violent pursuers of peace. Their personal stories tell an inspiring story of the human potential that is unleashed when people have the courage to follow the power of their own consciences.

Apkon and Young spent considerable time in the region since August 2013, researching, filming and following the activities of Combatants for Peace. While the work of the Combatants is not widely known, it represents what is possibly one of the most refreshing and hopeful models for nonviolent activism. Such movements, which build support for peace and coexistence at the community level are vital to compel

political leaders to create and sustain political solutions.

While several notable films have dealt with activism in the region, none has chronicled a bi-national movement like Combatants for Peace, which was created and is sustained by both Israelis and Palestinians working jointly towards specific solutions to the conflict. Moreover, as individuals with personal experience in violent struggle, the Combatants for Peace members provide an extraordinary level of credibility and legitimacy to the urgent need for nonviolent solutions.

At a time in our world when societies are becoming more polarized and painfully few people are speaking of nonviolent solutions to our conflicts, popular movements like Combatants for Peace have the potential to capture the public's imagination and shift the conversation from the inevitability of conflict, to the possibility and process of establishing lasting peace.

While the film is based in the Middle East, it creates an experience that addresses universal themes that are relevant to all of us - regardless of geography. It is a story of the human potential unleashed when we stop participating in a story that no longer serves us, and with the power of our convictions take action to create a new possibility.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT – STEPHEN APKON

The work of the former enemy Combatants depicted in the film begins with their personal stories, so I will do so here as well.

I landed in Israel for the first time on July 5th, 1976, as a 14-year-old, having taken off from Boston on the evening of the US Bicentennial. As we landed at Lod airport, the pilot pointed out a large plane on the runway and announced that it had just returned from Entebbe, Uganda with all of the rescued hostages aboard. We came into a country with people literally dancing in the streets – having overcome its enemy once again. We would soon learn that while the commander of the mission, Yoni Netanyahu and three hostages were killed in the operation, more than a hundred hostages were safely home. Six weeks later, having travelled through Israel and the West Bank, a connection to this land and people was firmly embedded in me.

As the years unfolded, I returned often, and watched as the level of separation and violence and hatred grew, eventually unable to visit places I had travelled to easily when younger. In 1993, with the signing of the Oslo Accords, it seemed that peace was again possible – only to end with the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin on November 4, 1995 – my thirty fourth birthday.

Living in the region in 1997-98 during the Gulf War, we experienced the daily tension of wondering where and when the next suicide bombing would occur, we were instructed to get gas masks for our children and ourselves, and I understood more with each passing day what it meant to be under constant threat. I saw family members come of age in the Israeli military, two of whose lives were cut tragically short during their service.

I developed an underlying fear of “the Other” as the years of suicide bombings and the Second Intifada raged, Oslo disintegrated, Prime Minister Rabin was assassinated, and I internalized what Abba Eban had famously said “The Palestinians never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity,” and former Prime Minister Ehud Barak updated in 2000 as he said “Apparently there is no partner for peace.”

At the same time, I also had a sense for the humanity of the Palestinians and understood that it was all a matter of context. I remember reading a Time magazine story about a school that had been bombed during The Troubles in Northern Ireland. It talked about a poster on the back of the door to the school that was one of the few things left in the rubble, and the poster said “If you were born where they were born, and you were taught what they were taught, you’d believe what they believe.”

I brought all this history and pretext to our first meeting with this group of former enemy Combatants who decided to lay down their weapons and pursue an end to the conflict through non-violence. When we first met some of the founders of Combatants for Peace while doing research for a potential project, I asked Chen Alon, a former officer in an IDF tank unit, what the organization was really about. Without missing a beat, he replied: “We are an organization of people taking responsibility for our own creation.” Sulaiman al-Khatib, one of the Palestinian founders of the organization, who spent a decade in Israeli prisons, spoke of Mandela, Gandhi, and Martin Luther King, Jr., concurred, and spoke of the need for Palestinians to move past their own “victimhood,” And they talked about how impossible it was to get mainstream media to tell their story because “nonviolence doesn’t sell.” I understood immediately, that this was an important story to tell.

Soon after, I found myself returning to the West Bank, for the first time since 1976, and brought with me those fears and perceptions, yet a deeper knowing kept me moving forward, bringing me to meet an extraordinary group of people – all former soldiers and freedom fighters, who have laid down their weapons in an act of courage and humanity and are working together to bring a non-violent end to the Conflict.

In the two years following this meeting, together with Andy Young, I have spent extensive time throughout Israel and the West Bank, documenting their work. I have seen them working tirelessly, as the only group of enemy combatants I am aware of that are actively working together through non-violence during an on-going military conflict. What I have learned is that this is NOT just a story of two people destined to be forever at war. And it is not even just about this particular conflict. It is about our ability to transform – individually and collectively.

What I found in each of them was a common experience. Growing up in a particular national and cultural narrative, each of them had not only dreamed of being a “hero,” they had acted from that place. Whether in an elite unit of the Israeli Defence Forces, or a commander of a local terror cell, or someone about to detonate themselves as a suicide bomber, they had all experienced a moment – either of trauma or just a profound realization – that they were only actors; acting a role in someone else’s play. They understood that none of it had to be the way it was, but was simply created by so many people’s choices before them. And once they knew this, they couldn’t not know. They couldn’t go back to an old narrative.

I have had to do my own work as well, as I have had to look at all the places these narratives were embedded in me. And I too have come to understand that this film is not just about this Conflict and these people. It is a universal story of how we get stuck in our own stories – whether national, familial, religious or otherwise – and act as if they are a concrete reality. By seeing them as stories and not reality, we can begin to take responsibility for our own creation, and realize that we have the opportunity to create a new story.

As one of the former combatants says “It’s not the weather! It doesn’t just happen to us. We make it happen.” I see this film as a call to action and responsibility – deeply personal and completely collective and universal, and I have been deeply privileged to understand this and tell this story through the courageous actions of these people.

DIRECTOR’S STATEMENT – ANDREW L. YOUNG

When I began making this film I had little knowledge of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict beyond the story I had been fed by the news media — that of two peoples locked in an eternal, hopeless struggle. This view was dashed the first time we spent a day at a Combatants for Peace workshop. The stories shared by these courageous men and women — how they had made the transformation from fighters to peace activists in spite of everything their societies were telling them — were deeply human.

I felt I had witnessed something much closer to our true essence than what the media purports to be truth, and we tend to imitate. It was clear to me that first day that their collective story had to be told. The process of telling it was one of discovering how tribal narratives can be transcended through openness and dialogue. Their conviction was as simple and strong as the graffiti art painted on the separation wall: “Love Wins.” My own views about the true potential of our species will never be the same.

DISTURBING THE PEACE – THE CONCEPT

There have been many strong films over the years that have explored the roots of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, or documented various projects, organizations or people that are working to end the conflict. We wanted to do something different. Having witnessed the personal transformation of each of the subjects – from armed combatants to partners working together to create a new reality through non-violence, we wanted to create a vehicle for others to experience this transformation within themselves.

Each of the subjects of the film grew up in a particular context and narrative – based on fear and desire, and we relied extensively on archival footage to root the audience in these narratives. In a very real sense, everything makes sense, and in growing up within these narratives, each of the characters chose to be a hero within their own national narrative.

The work of Combatants for Peace begins with the personal story along the lines of the South African Truth and Reconciliation process. They recognize that only by confessing their actions can they integrate them and move forward in creating something different. We chose to use this method as one of the central backbones to the film. In helping bring these personal narratives to audiences, we utilized an Errol Morris inspired set up for the interviews, allowing each character to speak directly to Steve, who was projected into the camera lens for the conversation. This was to bring a level of intimacy and immediacy to the audience.

We also used some visualizations and re-enactments to help bring the audience into the emotional space of the characters, as they talked about their specific experiences – in their early years, as fighters, and in their transformation.

With the formation of Combatants for Peace, we were able to rely on verite footage together with their personal interviews, in order to document their work. They gave us intimate access to their homes, workshops and activities. And at each turn, they left us more inspired.

DISTURBING THE PEACE – THE TITLE

The characters are deeply involved in nonviolent resistance, in an effort to end the Occupation and achieve a two state solution, with Israelis and Palestinians living peacefully alongside each other. In this work, they have utilized creative processes, including Augusto Boal's Theater of the Oppressed and the work of Bread and Puppet to deliver their message.

One of the protests we filmed included families, puppets, a small marching band, and scores of individuals – Palestinian and Israeli – who had gathered to protest. During the event, the Israeli military showed up. They singled out two of the leaders, and as the protest wound down and everyone headed home, they arrested two of our subjects, Mohammed and Chen for "Disturbing the Peace." It made us think about the irony of being arrested for Disturbing the Peace in a completely nonviolent event and raised the questions, what is "the Peace?" and who is "Disturbing" it?

When an arrest is made for "Disturbing the Peace," not as a way of protecting the peacefulness of the environment but rather as a form of social control, then what is referred to as "peace" is actually the status quo.

The Combatants for Peace and many other human rights participants who continue their efforts to transform their societies, often deal with arrests and other harassment from the entrenched structures and people whose role it is to protect the status quo. They stand in a long line of people – from Gandhi to MLK Jr., Rosa Parks and many others who have been arrested and those today who continue to be willing to "disturb the peace," in an effort to help all of us move toward a more just and peaceful world.

We wanted to take the opportunity to honor those who are willing to disturb the "peace" or the status quo to create a better world and to pose a very personal question to each of us: what are we willing to stand for? Are you willing to disturb the peace for a world that you believe in?

Film Participants

Suliman al-Khatib Raised in the village of Hizme in northeast Jerusalem, Suliman joined the “Fatah” movement when he was 13 years old. At the age of 14, he was arrested for attacking two Israelis and served 10 years in Israeli prison. Suliman is a Co-Founder and current Director of Combatants for Peace.

Chen Alon Chen served for four years in the Israeli army and then for 10 years as an operations officer in the reserves. Later, he signed a petition initiated by soldiers and officers refusing to serve in the occupied territories – the “Courage to Refuse Letter.” He is a Co-Founder of Combatants for Peace. Chen is a theatre director, facilitator and lecturer at Tel Aviv University.

Shifa al-Qudsi From the West Bank town of Tulkarem, as a 24-year-old beauty technician, Shifa was recruited to blow up a supermarket in the nearby Israeli town of Netanya. Before she could complete her mission, Shifa was arrested and later convicted. She served a six year sentence in prison. There, Shifa realized that many Israelis wanted peace as well. She joined Combatants for Peace after her release from prison. Shifa still lives in Tulkarem in Palestine.

Maia Hascal Born in Nofit village in northern Israel, Maya is a social worker who volunteered for reserve duty after finishing her mandatory service in the Israeli Defense Forces. Following a traumatic event, as she became increasingly aware of the effects of the Occupation on both the Palestinians and Israeli soldiers needing to enforce it, she realized a different path must be taken. Maia joined Combatants for Peace in an effort to resolve this situation through nonviolence.

Mohammed Owedah Mohammed was born in Silwan, East Jerusalem. As a teenager, he was involved in illegal violent anti-occupation activities and served time in prison. Mohammed lives in East Jerusalem and is now a social worker and activist for peace.

Jamel Qassas Jamel was born in the Deheisha refugee camp outside of Bethlehem. His brother was killed by the IDF during the 1st intifada. He went to jail 13 times for his participation in the 1st intifada. He is a member of The Parents Circle - Families Forum as well as Combatants for Peace. He works in construction and continues to live in Deheisha with his wife and children.

Avner Wishnitzer Avner Wishnitzer was born and raised in Kibbutz Kvutsat Shiller. Between 1994 and 1998 he served as a combatant in the elite unit Sayeret Matkal. In late 2003 he was part of a group of soldiers and officers in that unit that publicly refused to serve in the occupied territories. Avner is a co-founder of Combatants for Peace. In 2010 he was awarded the Goldberg IEE Prize for Peace in the Middle East, together with CFP co-founder Bassam Aramin. He is a professor of Ottoman History and resides with his family in Jerusalem.

Assaf Yacobovitz Assaf served as an officer in the Israeli Air Force. After taking part in Operation Cast Lead (the first Gaza War) he joined Combatants for Peace. Assaf is a psychologist who lives in Tel Aviv.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

Stephen Apkon (Director and Producer) is a filmmaker and social entrepreneur. He is the Founder and former Executive Director of the Jacob Burns Film Center, a non-profit film and education center located in Pleasantville, NY. Opened in 2001, the JBFC has become one of the premier film institutions in the United States, with a Board of Directors that includes Steven Spielberg, Ron Howard and Jonathan Demme among others.

Disturbing the Peace is his directorial debut. He is a Co-Producer of *Presenting Princess Shaw*, directed by Ido Haar (distributed by Magnolia Pictures and Participant Media), Producer of *I'm Carolyn Parker*, directed by Jonathan Demme and *Enlistment Days*, also directed by Haar, and Executive Producer of *Planetary*. Mr. Apkon is the author of *The Age of the Image: Redefining Literacy in a World of Screens*, published by Farrar, Straus & Giroux in April 2013 - foreword by Martin Scorsese.

Andrew Young (Director and Cinematographer) is an acclaimed filmmaker whose work has received an Academy Award nomination, two Emmy Awards, seven Emmy nominations, and five awards at the Sundance Film Festival including the "Grand Jury Prize." He has directed and photographed over a dozen documentaries, including *Children of Fate*, *Cutting Loose*, *Americanos*, *The Last Royals*, *Deadly Messengers*, *Lives in Hazard*, *Madagascar: A World Apart*, and *Glacier Bay: Alaska's Wild Coast*. Young is also an award-winning cinematographer who has received the Excellence in Cinematography prize at Sundance three times as well as a Cinematography Emmy Award and the Cinematography Prize at the Jackson Hole Wildlife Film Festival. His work has been exhibited theatrically and on HBO, Cinemax, National Geographic, the BBC and PBS.

Ori Derdikman (Editor) is a highly imaginative and creative film editor who has already established a reputation as one of the most up and coming editors. She graduated from the prestigious Sam Spiegel Film & Television School in Jerusalem and has since gone on to collaborate with some of the strongest directors in Israel.

Marcina Hale (Co-Producer) is co-founder of Reconsider. With degrees in both Media and Psychotherapy, it is part of Marcina's vision to utilize film as a catalyst to create experiences that evoke thought and conversations that both challenge and inspire a way of relating to live more dynamically. Marcina is also a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (LMFT). In her roles as master therapist and dynamic facilitator, she conducts workshops that challenge and inspire others to live their lives more consciously and to take responsibility for their own creations.

Rocco Caruso (Consulting Producer) has spent more the 25 years in film and television. Most recently he produced director David Kaplan's debut feature *Year of the Fish* which was an Official Selection of the Sundance Film Festival and winner of the Grand Jury Prize at the Avignon Film Festival. His feature film, *3 Backyards* won the Best Director Award at Sundance 2010. *The New York Times* called it "Beautiful and Forbidding" and Armond White of *New York Press* proclaimed the film to be a "momentous advance in indie-filmmaking."

Rocco executive produced Jonathan Demme's feature documentary *I'm Carolyn Parker: The Good, the Mad and the Beautiful* which premiered at the Venice Film Festival in September 2011. He produced Mr. Demme's *A Master Builder*, the follow-up film to Wally Shawn and André Gregory's *My Dinner with Andre* and *Vanya on 42nd Street*. Recently he Co-produced Demme's *Ricki and the Flash* and is currently executive producer for his Justin Timberlake concert film *JT + The Tennessee Kids*.

For more information visit www.disturbingthepeacefilm.com

ABOUT THE ORGANIZATIONS

Reconsider is a nonprofit media production and workshop organization that inspires innovation, encourages creativity, stirs responsibility, and forms community in an effort to make our world more dynamic, connected, and inspiring. Reconsider was involved in the award-winning productions of PLANETARY, directed by Guy Reid, which premiered at SXSW in 2015 and PRESENTING PRINCESS SHAW, directed by Ido Haar, which premiered at the Jerusalem Film Festival and the Toronto International Film Festival in 2016 and currently in theaters - distributed through Magnolia Pictures and Participant Media.

DISTURBING THE PEACE was developed and produced by Reconsider. The organization is currently in pre-production of several additional documentary projects and is developing experiences and workshops that explore and engage audiences in more conscious and connected living as it asks two fundamental questions: What kind of world do you want to live in? What kind of life do you want to create?

For more information visit www.reconsider.org

Combatants for Peace is a bi-national movement of Palestinians and Israelis who actively participated in the cycle of violence in the region, but have since chosen the path of nonviolence in promoting peace and co-existence. The movement holds nonviolent protests, educational tours of the Occupied Territories, in-house meetings, "Learning Peace" lectures, and meetings of activists in Israel and in Palestine. Combatants for Peace strives for the end of the Occupation and opposes any form of violence on either side, calling for the recognition of a dialogue between partners.

For more information visit www.cfpeace.org

Abramorama is an independent distribution and marketing company. An industry leader in the focused, personalized form of film distribution, Abramorama provides invaluable alternatives to filmmakers and content owners. Coming off the successful releases of Laurie Anderson's astonishing New York Times critics' pick, HEART OF A DOG, and Dawn Porter's Sundance Award-winner TRAPPED, Abramorama's recent multiple-nominated and award-winning titles also include Showtime's LISTEN TO ME MARLON (National Board of Review Winner) and Drafthouse's THE LOOK OF SILENCE (2016 Documentary Academy Award® Nominee and 2015 IDA Best Documentary Winner).

Over the course of more than 20 years, Abramorama has successfully distributed and marketed hundreds of films, including Asif Kapadia's SENNA, Robert Stone's PANDORA'S PROMISE, Cameron Crowe's PEARL JAM TWENTY, Sacha Gervasi's ANVIL! THE STORY OF ANVIL, Banksy's Academy Award®-nominated, EXIT THROUGH THE GIFT SHOP, the surprise indie hit AWAKE: THE LIFE OF YOGANANDA, and the critically acclaimed documentaries PARTICLE FEVER and AN HONEST LIAR.

Abramorama continues to lead in event cinema distribution, with current titles including HAMLET starring Maxine Peake from Manchester's Royal Exchange Theatre, Operas from La Scala, Roma, Fenice & Torino, and recent titles including the Royal Opera House Ballet and Opera Cinema Season, Green Day's HEART LIKE A HAND GRENADE, Avi Lewis and Naomi Klein's THIS CHANGES EVERYTHING, Charles Ferguson's TIME TO CHOOSE, Barbara Kopple's MISS SHARON JONES!, Luke Meyer's BREAKING A MONSTER, and Ron Howard's THE BEATLES: EIGHT DAYS A WEEK- THE TOURING YEARS.

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