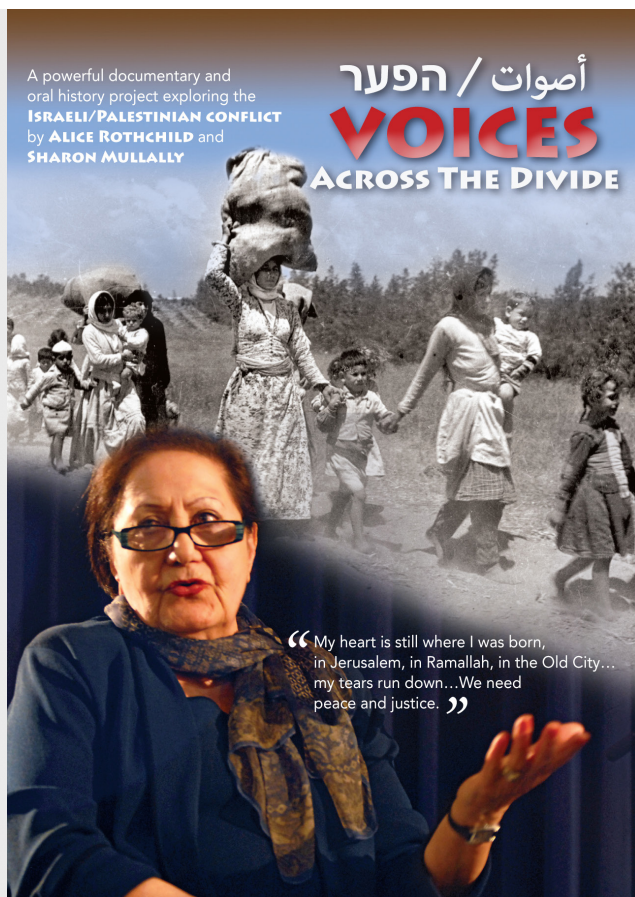


VOICES ACROSS THE DIVIDE



A documentary by
Alice Rothchild and Sharon Mullally

57min | Color and BW | Stereo | USA | 2013

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LOGLINE

Interviews with Palestinians in the US are woven together with historical photos and footage to create an intimate picture of one of the most complex conflicts of our time.

SHORT SYNOPSIS

Voices Across the Divide is a powerful documentary and oral history project exploring the Israeli/Palestinian conflict through rarely heard personal stories. Narrated by Alice Rothchild, an American Jew raised on the tragedies of the Holocaust and the dream of a Jewish homeland in Israel, the film follows my personal journey as I begin to understand the Palestinian narrative, while exploring the Palestinian experience of loss, occupation, statelessness, and immigration to the US.



LONG SYNOPSIS

Voices Across the Divide is a powerful documentary and oral history project exploring the Israeli/Palestinian conflict through rarely heard personal stories. Narrated by Alice Rothchild, an American Jew raised on the tragedies of the Holocaust and the dream of a Jewish homeland in Israel, the film follows my personal journey as I begin to understand the Palestinian narrative, while exploring the Palestinian experience of loss, occupation, statelessness, and immigration to the US.

Voices Across the Divide shares the stories that are rarely told, delving into this anguished history and the lives of Palestinians through the vehicle of individual and family memories, bringing the conflict to its most personal and intimate level with honesty, humor, outrage, and tragedy. As an adult, I realized that I had never met an Arab before and that I had only learned one part of this complex history. The documentary is both my personal journey to understand the Palestinian narrative as well as the implications and contradictions of deeply held cultural beliefs in the Jewish community. The exploration of moments in history and daily life are used as metaphors for the larger issues of British colonialism, the 1948 and 1967 Arab/Israeli wars, the Palestinian experience of dispossession, loss, statelessness, refugee status, occupation, immigration, and activism. By interviewing Palestinian families living in the US who are survivors of the Nakba, (also known as The Catastrophe or War of Israeli Independence), and the Naksa (also known as the Six Day War), the film creates an oral history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through the eyes of Palestinians and the heart of a Jew. Exploring these stories, my film confronts commonalities of trauma, yearning, immigration, and the realities of injustice, dispossession, and the imbalance of power. The narratives humanize this tortured and misunderstood history and raise voices to build a just peace in Israel and Palestine.

The film opens with interviews of Palestinian survivors of the 1948 and 1967 wars to personalize the factual narrative for those unfamiliar with this history. This intimate storytelling provides an opportunity to explore from the vantage point of a Jewish American, the voices of Palestinians and to find the human commonality. Facing the truth of Palestinian dispossession is both central to understanding and peacemaking, and the most difficult of tasks. In the film the personal narrative is central, starting with my journey as a Jew born in 1948 to first generation parents, growing up with Israel as a friend, a source of pride, and ultimately my heartbreak. Like many Jewish Americans, I succumbed to the national mythos; there were no Palestinians and no Nakba. There was no doubt that this land belonged rightfully to the Jews. In 1981, my mother, Sylvia Rothchild, published *Voices from the Holocaust*, which chronicled the oral histories of survivors of the Nazi Holocaust. Immersed in these stories, I began to understand that buried in the wounds of my own people's near annihilation, another people's story was lost.

From here, the film explores interviews with Palestinians from Ann Arbor to Boston, asked to tell their Nakba stories. The act of the Palestinian telling and the Jew listening depicts a sharing of consciousness, humanity, and reconciliation on a most personal level. The stories reveal a Nakba that has never ended, starting before 1948 through 1967 to the present, revealing the ongoing trauma of statelessness and the complicated issues of identity and personal agency in the face of loss and rebuilding. Using these personal narratives with historical and modern day photos and footage, maps, and an original musical score, a powerful emotional understanding is created.

Voices Across the Divide is geared towards a broad range of audiences, from university students to faith communities to social justice organizations, as well as the general public. There is also a website for further research with historical timelines, resources, and many of the full interviews.

While the language of the documentary is English, Hebrew and Arabic subtitles are available. The documentary will appeal to Jewish and Arab audiences and will be offered to independent, Jewish, and Palestinian film festivals, public television, cable TV, and independent theaters. The documentary will be submitted to film festivals focusing on human rights, peace and political activism, Middle East issues, and women's voices. *Voices Across the Divide* is also appropriate for university courses dealing with topics such as: the Middle East, the Holocaust, peace and conflict studies, and Jewish and Arab history.

By weaving in an understanding of the Holocaust, the documentary uniquely engages the audience in Jewish history and then invites the viewer to see and hear the ramifications of the founding of the State of Israel for the people who bore the consequences of that reality. Ultimately the Palestinians interviewed speak powerfully of their family traumas, their resilience, and their call for political action to resolve this conflict.

BIOGRAPHIES OF FILMMAKERS

Alice Rothchild is a physician, activist, and author of “Broken Promises, Broken Dreams: Stories of Jewish and Palestinian Trauma and Resilience,” Pluto Press 2007, revised edition 2010, translated into Hebrew and German. Alice is co-founder and co-chair of American Jews for a Just Peace-Boston, is on the coordinating committee of Jewish Voice for Peace Boston, and has organized annual health and human rights delegations to Israel and Palestine since 2003, lecturing widely, and writing numerous articles. www.alicerothchild.com
(photo credit: Melanie Temin Menedez)



Sharon Mullally is an Emmy Award winning independent producer/director and editor and co-founder of extendedPLAY Inc. Her work appears regularly on local and national public television. Sharon spent ten years in staff positions at broadcast television stations in Philadelphia and Baltimore and for the past fifteen years, Sharon has primarily produced media that focuses on social justice. Sharon has served as board member and workshop instructor for Philadelphia Independent Film/Video Association and instructor/facilitator at Scribe Video Center. Her editorial work has appeared in the SILVERDOCS Film Festival, the Human Rights Watch Film Festival, the DoubleTake Documentary Festival, and the Philadelphia Festival of Independents.
(photo credit: Sharon Gunther)



WHO IS IN THE DOCUMENTARY?

WADAD ABED

Wadad was born in Nablus in 1949, the fifth girl of seven children, in a family with a strong political sense of Palestinian and Arab identity. Her father owned a liquor store. Wadad experienced the terrors of the War of 1967; her family immigrated to the US in 1968 after the situation became increasingly dangerous. In the US she became politically active and struggled with her own issues of identity, the role of the US in world politics, and her personal search for understanding of the Jewish experience of the Holocaust.

SALMA ABU AYYASH

Salma was born in Jordan in 1968. Her parents are from Bayt Ommar, outside of Hebron, but they moved to Jordan for work and were not allowed to return after the 1967 War. Her grandparents and parents experienced British colonization and her father was politically active both in the US where he was educated and at home. Salma experienced Black September, discrimination and conflict in Jordan, and the dangers and indignities of the Israeli occupation, but she came to love Palestine visiting her grandparents in Bayt Ommar. She really learned Palestinian history only after coming to the US in 1986 to study engineering. She remains politically active, dealing with issues of resistance and identity, living in the US with her husband and son.

HANNEH AHWAL

Hanneh Ahwal was born in 1936 in Jaffa, one of seven children, and fled with her family during the 1948 War to Ramallah. She has vivid memories of the fighting and the expulsion. In Ramallah she married and had eight children and was very involved with the Catholic Church. Her family gradually immigrated to the US, but after living through the traumas of the 1967 War, when her father in the US became ill, she finally joined her family in the US in 1974.

TERRY AHWAL

Terry was born in 1956 in Ramallah to a family of eight children. Her father was a carpenter. While her parents and grandparents experienced the 1948 expulsion from Jaffa, her first understanding of war came in 1967. She became increasingly politically active while experiencing the realities of occupation, curfews, home invasions, beatings, and arrests. Her parents sent her to the US in 1972 for her personal safety. In the US she has remained politically engaged and started a program through the Ramallah Federation called Project Hope.

HALA AJLUNI

Hala was born in 1929 in Katamon, West Jerusalem, one of eight children, and her father was a scholar, philosopher, and teacher. She was brought up like her father who was a literary free thinker. They had Jewish and Muslim, Greek and Armenian friends. She remembers the Balfour Declaration and the Dayr Yassin massacre. With the increasing violence, her education was disrupted and the family fled to their summer home in Birzeit. In 1949 she married and moved to Ramallah and then she taught school in Damascus, Syria where her husband was politically active. After seven years, despite a lack of papers, they were able to move to the US. She has three children, eight grandchildren, and three great-great grandchildren.

FARIS ALAMI

Faris was born in 1972 in Kuwait. His grandparents and parents were displaced from an area between Jaffa and Gaza and from Be'ersheba by the 1948 War; his grandparents currently live in Gaza. His family has Palestinian roots dating back to 1090 and they were well-to-do business people. His parents moved to study in Egypt and then to work in Kuwait during the 1967 War. He experienced the chaos of the invasion of Kuwait by Saddam Hussein, triggering his grandfather's memories of the Nakba. Ultimately Faris came to the US in 1990 to go college; then as a stateless person, he applied for political asylum in 1991 but instead faced deportation orders from 1993- 2009. He is currently a businessman, married with two children in the US.

YUSIF BARAKAT

Yusif was born in 1935 in Haifa, in the neighborhood of Wadi'l Saleeb. Despite the British colonization, he remembers an idyllic childhood, which included Muslim, Christian, and Jewish friends. In 1947, with rising tensions, he was put on ship to the US because his family also had US citizenship. His transition was extremely traumatic. While learning English and completing high school, he delivered newspapers, then worked for Western Union, and after his father died, took his place at the Ford Motor Company. He later joined the US Air Force. He has been active in local politics and passionately works for global peace.

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DAPHNE BEARDMAN

Daphne was born in Haifa in 1934 of Greek-Italian ancestry. Her father was a shipping agent and the family lived a vibrant life with close family ties in the region. With increasing violence in 1947-1948, the family escaped suddenly to a cousin's just outside Haifa and then moved to Beirut and then Damascus where her father worked for the Red Cross and the family was granted refugee status. Her father's positive attitude helped the family reconstruct their devastated lives and he eventually got Greek citizenship. Daphne worked for UNRWA in Beirut for a few years and then moved with her family to Greece in 1961. She married an American and moved to the US where they raised their daughters.

DIANA BUTTU

Diana was born in Toronto, Canada to a family of three daughters in 1970. She has dual Canadian and Israeli citizenship. Her parents are Israeli citizens from Nazareth, although her father's family was originally from nearby Al-Mujaydil, (now called Midgal HaEmek), and fled to Nazareth in 1948. His family then fled north, possibly as far as Lebanon, but returned to Nazareth. As Palestinians, her family was officially "internally displaced" or "present absentees" and lived under military rule in Israel from 1948-1965. Her young parents left for Canada in 1966 after her father's younger brother was killed by a drunk Jewish Israeli driver who was never charged with his death. Arriving as new immigrants, her mother became a seamstress and her father a welder. Diana learned of her Palestinian heritage and the on-the-ground realities of second class citizenship and occupation from her grandmother and cousins when visiting Nazareth and was inspired to move back to Palestine and to become a human rights lawyer. In 2000 she joined the PLO legal advisory team for the Camp David negotiations and left disillusioned five years later. She is a strong advocate of the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanction movement that resurged after the International Court of Justice declared the separation wall illegal in 2004.

NIMER HADDAD

Nimer was born in Al Bassa in Northwestern Galilee in 1939 to a family with three children. After hearing about the Dayr Yassin massacre, his family fled in 1948 to Alma Alshaab in southern Lebanon. They lived in the Rashideyeh refugee camp and then moved to the Debayeh camp on the outskirts of Beirut, living under terrible conditions where his father worked as an illegal laborer. Nimer went to UNRWA schools and then to Germany for further education. Once he became a US citizen he worked at the United Nations in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Yemen, Egypt, and Ghana, as a consultant and expert in AV communications.

GEORGE KHOURY

George was born in Jerusalem in 1942 to a family of six children. In 1947 the family lived in Lyd; his father was a surveyor. George has vivid traumatic recollections of the British occupation, battles with the Haganah, being loaded onto trucks during the family's expulsion, and the endless march eastward towards Birzeit in 1948. His family lived a traumatic life for two years and then moved to Amman, Jordan where his father bought a piece of land adjacent to the Jabal Hussein refugee camp. The resources and ingenuity of his mother were critical to his survival and the survival of countless other refugees. He came to the US in 1961 where he received a degree in mechanical engineering and business administration. He has established many Arab American organizations in Metro Detroit and was the former president and co-founder of the Association of Arab American University Graduates (AAUG) and co-founder of the Organization of Arab Students at Wayne State University.

TAHIR MONSOUR

Tahir was born in 1936 in a rural village, Al Qubab, in the Ramle district, one of eleven children. He remembers two of his brothers in the village militia in 1948 and the excitement of the resistance, then the frightening evacuation of the village with the inhabitants walking east towards Ramallah. His older brother Ahmed had just completed medical school and was killed by a land mine. The family moved just outside Amman Jordan, living in a tent for a year, and in 1951, Tahir's mother died in a state of trauma and disorientation. His father and brothers pooled their resources and started a flour mill. Tahir moved back to Ramallah to attend the Friends School and was able to come to the US for college in 1953. He is married with three children and five grandchildren.

HASAN NEWASH

Hasan was born in 1942 in the Jerusalem district of Ein Kerem and his father was a home builder; the extended family had extensive fruit orchards and olive trees. His father and his uncles were in the resistance and in 1948 he personally experienced the traumatic and terrifying expulsion of his family, first to his aunt's house and then to Al-Sult, the eastern part of Jordan. This intense trauma and subsequent losses became the psychological foundations for the rest of his life. He returned to Jerusalem to live with his brother and complete his education. Once he came to the US his political activism was grounded in his experience as a Palestinian and in his early personal losses. He is now Director of the Palestine Office in Detroit, Michigan and works to honor Edward Said's observation that if a culture does not tell its narrative it ceases to exist, it experiences cultural genocide.

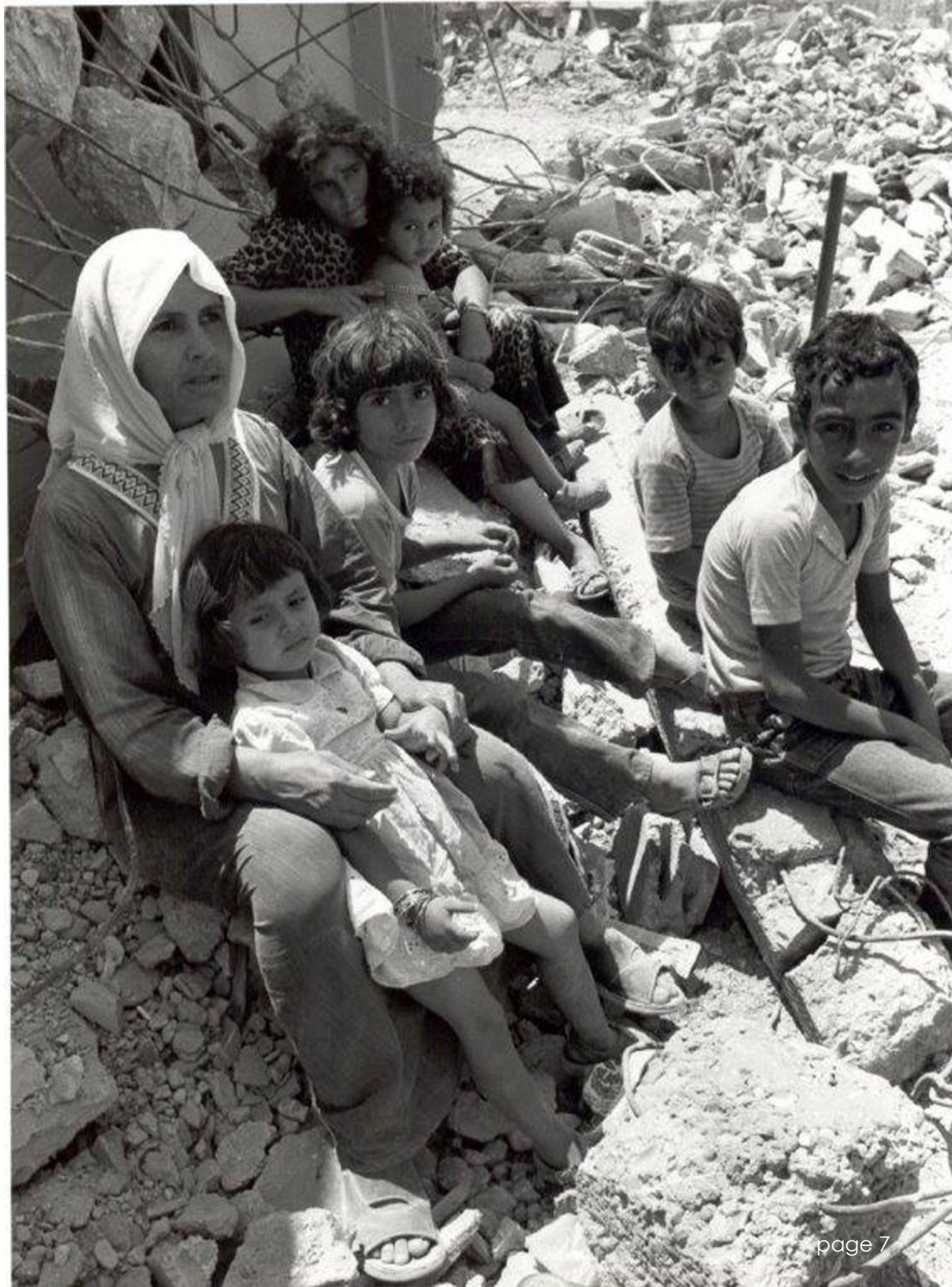
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JAMILA OKAH

Jamila was born in a beautiful house in West Jerusalem in 1941, the oldest of ten children. With increasing threats from the British and the Haganah, the family fled in 1948 and went to Syria for two years. After worsening economic difficulties, they returned to Jerusalem where they lived outside the Old City in the neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrar through an arrangement with UNRWA. In 1967 Orthodox Jews laid claim to their house, evicted her parents and began a long legal struggle with the Hanoun family that included repeated evictions, protests and court cases that remain unresolved. Four of her siblings live in the US, one in Saudi Arabia, and four in Jerusalem.

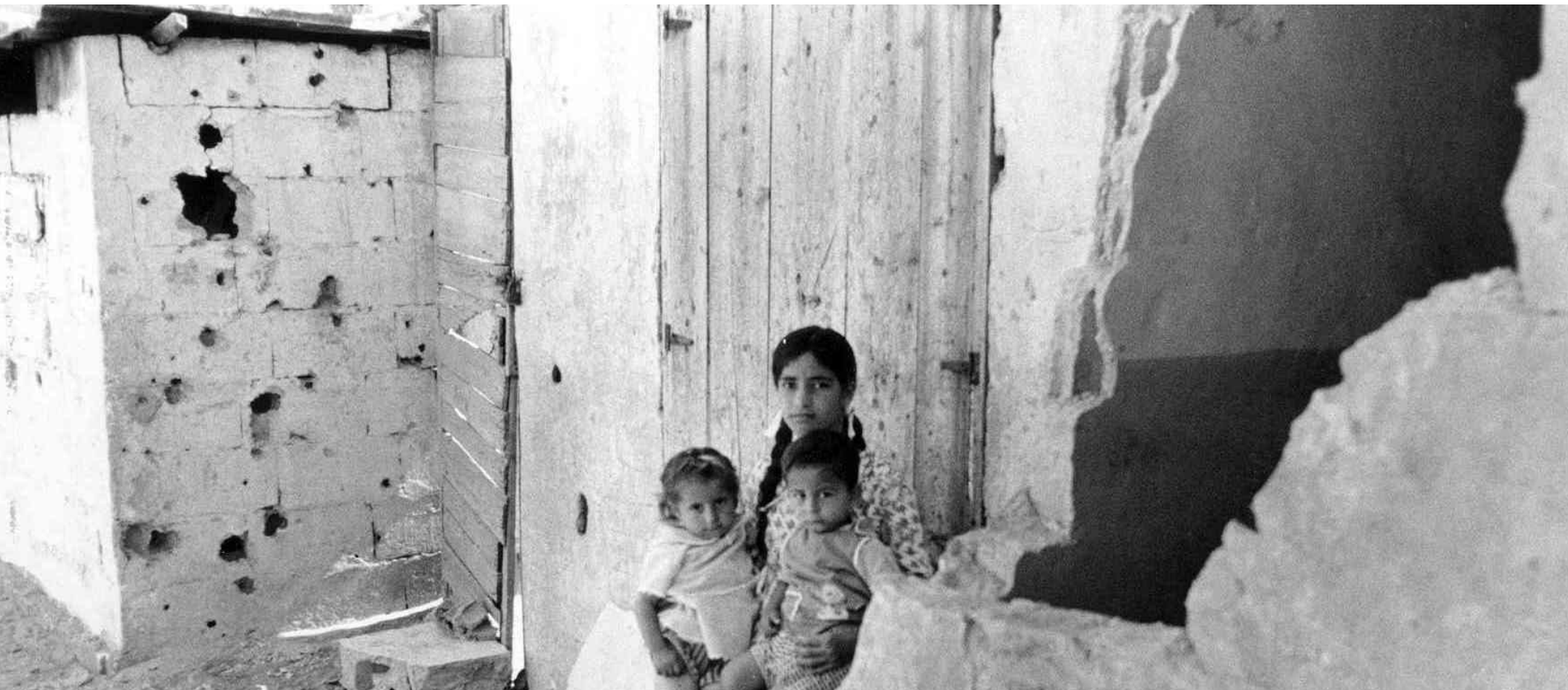
YAMILA SHANNAN

Yamila was born in Bogota, Colombia, in 1968, and her family was from a small village near Birzeit. Her father was active in the resistance movement, was an eyewitness to the Dayr Yassin, massacre, and left the region after the 1948 War. Yamila is one of ten children and grew up in a strong Arab community in Colombia, speaking Spanish and Arabic. When her merchant father was killed in 1977, her mother took the family back to the village in Palestine. Her application for family reunification was rejected and it took a legal case to the Israeli Supreme Court and eleven years of struggle for the children to get their IDs. Her mother had to place her daughters in an orphanage, Dar al-Tifl al-Arabi, founded by Hind al-Husseini, so that they could receive an education. Consequently Yamila became rooted in Jerusalem. In the First Intifada in 1987, she was active in popular committees for education, experiencing curfews, checkpoints and the arrests of her siblings. She remains active in fighting for human rights and in 1997 came to the US for graduate school with a focus on the politics of education. She continues to work as an educator in the US.



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

I am a storyteller and an activist interested in the voices of people who usually are not heard. I feel that the Israel/Palestine conflict is a central issue for American Jews, both as it defines our identities and also our politics. I began to focus on the region after a secular Yom Kippur discussion in 1997 where we asked the question: how can progressive Jews focus their energies in a creative and productive manner when it comes to understanding Israel/Palestine and working for a just resolution to this complex struggle? After organizing annual health and human rights delegations to Israel/Palestine and developing a personal understanding of the realities on the ground, I wrote *Broken Promises, Broken Dreams: Stories of Jewish and Palestinian Trauma and Resilience*, first published in 2007 with a second edition in 2010. The book explores the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, as an American Jew working with dissenting Israelis and Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. While book touring, I found Palestinians in the US were often eager to tell me their own family stories. From these experiences came the vision for this film, recording these varied Palestinian narratives, weaving together family photos and historic photos and footage, and an emotionally powerful original music score. By revealing this invisible history I am also motivated by a desire to reach across divides within my own society and to challenge and energize my audience towards creative political change.





Alice Rothchild looking at a photograph of Hala Ajluni's family, interview, Detroit, Michigan



Terry Ahwal telling Alice Rothchild about her family hiding in their basement in Ramallah during the 1967 War, interview, Canton, Michigan



Hala Ajluni, who was living at 472 Katamon, Upper Baka'a in West Jerusalem, telling Alice Rothchild about a relative being killed by the Irgun in the 1940s, interview, Detroit, Michigan



Tahir Mansour describing the Al Qubab village militia headed by his oldest brother, Ahmed, defending itself against a nearby Jewish settlement in the Ramle district in 1948, Detroit Michigan



CREDITS

VOICES ACROSS THE DIVIDE

FULL CREDITS
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DIRECTOR: ALICE ROTHCHILD

PRODUCER: SHARON MULLALLY AND ALICE ROTHCHILD

EDITOR: SHARON MULLALLY

ORIGINAL MUSIC: LAYLA EL NASSERY

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER: MARJORIE WRIGHT

CAMERA PEOPLE: NABIH HAKIM, MAURICE JACOBSEN,
EMMA KLEIN, TONY KOSKI, DAVID PITTS,
LYNN WEISSMAN, XIAOSHI STONE YU

ANIMATION: RANSOM WEAVER DESIGN

NARRATOR: DAN TARABORRELLI

SOUND MIX: JOHN AVARESE

CONSULTANT: PAMELA BERGER

ASSOCIATE PRODUCERS: EMMA KLEIN, ROSA VISSERS

ADVISORY COMMITTEE: JOCELYN AJAMI, MICHAL GOLDMAN, KAREN
KLEIN, HILARY RANTISI

WEBSITE: MISSA HILLS, YORAM MEITAL, ROSA VISSERS, ALICE ROTHCHILD

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FISCAL SPONSOR: EXTENDEDPLAY, INC.

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DAVID, MATT DEMAIIO, EILEEN KENNEDY, BRANDON MOYE, RIVA PEARSON,
SERENA REED, ALISSA ROTHCHILD, JESSICA SOLOMON,
ALTHEA SWETT

REVIEWS

VOICES ACROSS THE DIVIDE www.voicesacrossthedivide.com

Eitan Bronstein Aparicio
Founder of Zochrot

Voices Across the Divide is a unique example of a “talking heads” film that succeeds to move the viewer and takes him into a stories and testimonies world with empathy and fascination. Alice Rothchild puts her interviewees, all Palestinian refugees, on stage and makes them speak into a microphone in a way that amplifies not only their voices but also their beautiful humanity. They are not victims but citizens of this world struggling for freedom and justice. Alice, an American Jew, is explicitly with them, calling her viewers to action and by that, builds a bridge that fills Across the Divide. I find this movie beautiful and important.

Inez Hedges, Ph.D.
Professor of Languages, Literatures and Cultures
College of Social Sciences and Humanities
Northeastern University

Voices Across the Divide will take you on a historical journey that is, at the same time, a deeply personal narrative about the need for understanding and reconciliation between Jews and Palestinians. It's an ideal teaching tool for the classroom, for the community, and for sharing with friends and family. Viewing this beautifully directed and edited film is a transformative experience.

Elaine Hagopian
Professor Emerita of Sociology
Simmons College, Boston

Your film is truly excellent. You managed to be non-threatening, though I know there will be those who see it as such. It is very engaging to say the least. For me, it is the best Palestinian Oral History documentary I have seen, both because it is more than a documentary and because it doesn't follow the stale series of interviews bereft of context and hope.

Kudos to Alice Rothchild for producing an important, powerful and unique documentary. Rothchild gives life to the Palestinian tragedy as she parallels the telling of her own evolution from Zionism to compassionate awareness of Palestinian loss. She provides historical substance and a brilliant moving narrative of the chronology of events. With clarity and respect, she expresses empathy for both peoples, but recognizes that the Palestinian catastrophe has neither been acknowledged nor rectified. The film intertwines touchingly the telling of the history, which ties both people together, with the oral histories of a number of Palestinians from the 1948 and 1967 wars. The interviewees speak with dignity, not angst. The documentary's message is clear: resolution and reconciliation are possible when Palestinian grievances are recognized. Truly, *Voices Across the Divide* is a must see film. It is an invitation to the sanity Rothchild so superbly exhibits.

Dr. Sara Roy
Senior Research Scholar
Associate
Center for Middle Eastern Studies
Harvard University

A moving and deeply insightful journey into a history that Palestinians and Jews both share. Rothchild gives voice to Palestinians and in so doing, shows that she is giving voice to the Jewish people as well.

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