



Disturbing The Peace Discussion Guide

Director: Stephen Apkon, Andrew Young

Year: 2016

Time: 86 min

You might know this director from:

This is the debut feature film from this directorial team.

FILM SUMMARY

The Israel-Palestine conflict has been raging in one form or another since the early 20th century, with both Jews and Arab Muslims claiming rights to the land and bloody bouts of all-out war at various times in the wake of World War II. Despite recurring peace talks, the conflict continues today with the Israeli occupation of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, both territories inhabited primarily by Palestinian populations. And yet, the hope of peace is not yet lost.

At the heart of Stephen Apkon and Andrew Young's insightful, stirring *DISTURBING THE PEACE* is the ability of these long-standing enemies to simply empathize with one another, setting aside animosity for the sake of seeing from each other's perspective. The film begins with a handful of firsthand accounts from both sides. Elite Israeli soldiers speak of times when they committed acts of violence that destroyed the lives of countless Palestinian families, while Palestinian fighters, many of whom served years in prison, discuss life under the occupation and the extremist measures that one might be brought to in the fight for freedom. But most revealing is when individuals share the moment when they began to empathize with the other side.

Once the perspectives of both the Israeli soldiers and the Palestinian fighters are established, *DISTURBING THE PEACE* follows their journey as they confess their change of heart, make contact with one another, form an alliance under the banner of Combatants for Peace, and begin to publicly advocate for a nonviolent end to the occupation and peace between Israel and Palestine. Complex and poignant in its portrayal of a war-torn country ready to put its points of contention aside for the greater good of its peoples' future, *DISTURBING THE PEACE* is critical viewing.

FILM THEMES

The courageous members of Combatants for Peace featured in *DISTURBING THE PEACE* aim to show that empathy for one another is the key to settling the long-standing Israel-Palestine conflict.

SETTING THE STAGE OF THE ISRAEL-PALESTINE CONFLICT

It would be incredibly difficult to make a film about the immensely complex social implications of the Israel-Palestine conflict without first diving into a bit of the history and exploring some of the context that has led to the current situation. By conservatively employing archival footage of key moments in the recent history of the conflicts in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, *DISTURBING THE PEACE* is able to concisely and effectively set the stage for why the Israeli people have long felt justified in their occupation of Palestinian territories, while Palestinians feel that they've been living under the thumb of oppressive forces.

THE ABILITY TO EMPATHIZE

The quickest way to settle any conflict is to try to understand why exactly the person or people on the other side of the argument feel the way they do. The men and women who make up Combatants for Peace are just a few of those who have publicly shared their profound, transformative experiences of empathizing with their so-called enemies. As witnessed in the film, they discovered that by merely seeing their adversaries as humans who bear their own perspective of the world, they're own perspectives began to open up. Their simple affirmation of another's viewpoint has served as a catalyst to take further actions toward a real Palestinian-Israeli partnership.

FORGIVING THE PAST

Empathizing with a long-standing foe is the first step toward reconciliation, but forgiving them for their deeds of the past can be substantially more difficult. For the people followed in *DISTURBING THE PEACE*, the process started with simply trusting that they could be open and honest about their pasts with one another without fear of retribution, meeting face to face and admitting their guilt about how each of them mistreated the people on the other side of the divide. Everyone knows that nothing can right the wrongdoings of the past, but forgiveness forges the power to move forward, together.

CHANGE THROUGH PEACEFUL ACTIVISM

The history of the Israel-Palestine conflict is fraught with political failures, thus the occupation continues. Yet, groups like Combatants for Peace continue to share their message of empathy with hopes of an end to the occupation through peaceful activism. As seen in the film, activist Palestinians and Israelis have banded together to host rallies, marches, and even use art installations and theatrical events as non-violent tools used to promote the understanding of the implications of the occupation. Violence has bred only pain and misunderstanding, so why not try to lead with empathy and compassion for once?

“We, Israelis and Palestinians, call on both sides to act in courage and wisdom.”

Assaf Yacobovitz, *Combatants for Peace*

“Nonviolence is the greatest force, at the disposal of mankind. It is mightier than the mightiest weapon of destruction devised by the ingenuity of man. Destruction is not the law of the humans.”

Mahatma Gandhi

FILM FACTS:

- Stephen Apkon and Andrew Young’s *DISTURBING THE PEACE* had its world premiere at the Jerusalem Film Festival in July of 2016, followed by an additional screening projected on the separation wall itself. The film went on to a stint on the festival circuit, screening at the Traverse City Film Festival, where it won the Audience Award and the Founders Prize; Ebert Fest, where it won the Humanitarian Award; the Hamptons International Film Festival, where it won the Brizzolara Family Foundation Award for a Film of Conflict and Resolution; Movies That Matter Film Festival in The Hague; and the Big Sky Documentary Film Festival.
- Combatants for Peace is a bi-national, grassroots organization committed to a non-violent resolution to the Israel-Palestine conflict. It was founded in 2006 when Israelis and Palestinians who had taken an active role in the conflict, laid down their weapons and decided to forge a new path toward reconciliation through empathy, peace, and forgiveness rather than continued violence.
- The mission of Combatants for Peace is to work towards a two-state solution in the 1967 borders, or any other mutually agreed upon solution that will allow both Israelis and Palestinians to live in freedom, security, democracy, and dignity in their homeland.
- The brave people who appear in the film include the founders of Combatants for Peace: Sulaiman Khatib (Palestinian) and Chen Alon (Israeli), as well as active members Jamal Qassas (Palestinian), Avner Wishnitzer (Israeli), Shifa al-Qudsi (Palestinian), Maia Hascal (Israeli), Mohammed Owedah (Palestinian), and Assaf Yacobovitz (Israeli).
- As outlined by Zack Beauchamp at [Vox](#), “Today, the West Bank is nominally controlled by the Palestinian Authority and is under Israeli occupation. This comes in the form of Israeli troops, who enforce Israeli security restrictions on Palestinian movement and activities, and Israeli ‘settlers,’ Jews who build ever-expanding communities in the West Bank that effectively deny the land to Palestinians. Gaza is controlled by Hamas, an Islamist fundamentalist party, and is under Israeli blockade but not ground troop occupation.”
- Shifa al-Qudsi, a resident of the West Bank city of Tulkarem and member of Combatants for Peace who was featured in *DISTURBING THE PEACE*, was blocked from entering Israel for the film’s world premiere at the Jerusalem Film Festival, despite a formal request of the Shin Bet security service to allow al-Qudsi to attend the screening.

WAYS TO INFLUENCE

1. **Donate** to [Combatants for Peace](#). Funding helps them work towards a two-state solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict that embodies the organization’s humanistic values of freedom, democracy, security, and dignity for all.
2. **Participate** in supportive activities. Combatants for Peace organizes [local and international events](#) to help keep people informed and engaged on the topic of peace within Israel-Palestine.
3. **Invest** in peace. Organizations like [Search for Common Ground](#) partner with people around the world to ignite shared solutions to destructive conflicts.
4. **Host** a screening. *DISTURBING THE PEACE* is distributed for community showings and individual events via [Bullfrog Films and Gathr](#).

We believe a good documentary is just the beginning...

In a world of sound-bites, documentaries provide an opportunity to think, understand, share, and connect with the world.

They are controversial, divisive, fascinating, unexpected, and surprising. They can be thrillers, dramas, comedies, romance, tear-jerkers, and horror films.

Documentaries provide the perfect topic for meaningful conversations. If you want to talk about the things that matter with people that matter then pick a film, invite your friends, and watch & discuss together. It's as easy as that.

Influence Film Club – We are the conversation after the film.