

Listening to the "Other": Reflections on Storytelling and Conflict

by Noa Baum

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SILVER SPRING, Md., USA -- The Israeli-Palestinian conflict seeps despair into the American consciousness. Yet rarely do Americans get to hear the stories behind the bloodshed. Neither do most Israeli Jews and Palestinians know what it is like to live "on the other side," less than five miles away.

Two parallel narratives stand at the heart of the conflict. Endless layers of pain on both sides stifle a willingness to legitimize the other's narrative. But acknowledging the other's story is the first step toward dialogue and relationship building, the only alternative to the spiraling vortex of violence.

Jumana and I met at a California playground. I am Israeli; she is Palestinian. Both of us grew up in Jerusalem. Both of us now live in the U.S. We converse frequently. Still, it took us years to share our personal stories of growing up in Jerusalem on opposite sides. Those **[SNIP – End of preview.]**