



I Wage Peace . Org

Painting For Peace April 25th, 2010

“We will paint in the rain”

Twelve painting teams from area mosques, churches, and synagogues have raised \$6,000 to paint a 14 foot high by 48 foot long peace mural for posting on I-95, one of the nations busiest highways. Close to 100,000 viewers per day will see artwork hand painted by Muslims, Christians, and Jews, proving in public that we can and should work together for peace. But I am distraught. The forecast calls for rain, all day, starting early morning, and lasting for days. “Acrylic cannot be used in the rain.” I explain.

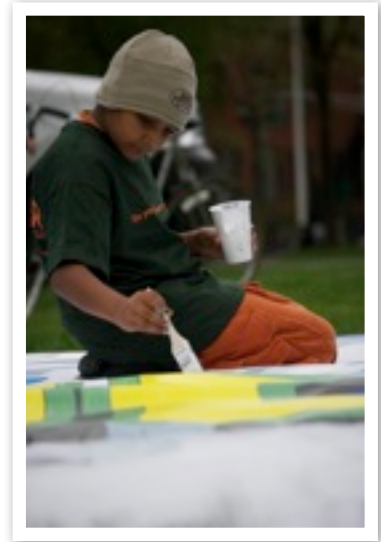
“What ever you do, don’t cancel,” replies Rabbi Brockman. “Our kids at Mishkan Israel are so excited, they can’t wait to start painting. Don’t cancel. We will paint in the rain if we have to, but don’t cancel. This is far too important and the kids are far too excited. You must go forward.”



“They have driven over an hour to paint with you”

I did not cancel, God smiled, and the rain stopped just as the painters arrived. We rolled out the canvas on the rain soaked New Haven Green and set to work. It was fifty-fifty degrees and fingers froze as Christian, Jew, and Muslim worked side by side. Small silly children painted; rosy faced teens painted; white haired seniors painted; smiling rabbis, ministers, and imams painted, and curious strangers looked on, inquired, and painted.

After a time, there arrived some youth with Palestinian headscarves. “Our brothers and sisters from New London are here!” I shouted. “They have driven over an hour to paint with you. Raise your hands, invite them in, show them where you are and where they can paint.” Hands flew up as Jews, Christians, and Muslims invited the New London team to join them on the canvas. The new painters merged into the painting, completing the work others had begun. “She is from Gaza,” said one girls father. “She is painting the Israeli flag; this is very special.” Slowly, the clear image of a Palestinian and an Israeli youth formed on the canvas, arm in arm, the flags of Israel and Palestine waving above their heads and over the words “We refuse to be enemies.”



“This was really fun”

Four sandwich boards surrounded us: “We paint these signs before you today as a public demonstration of our commitment to peace, health, and justice for the Israeli and Palestinian people. We do not need to agree on everything to work together for peace.” Every painter understood the gravity of the situation. Some wanted a two state solution, while others longed for a one state solution. Some supported divestment and boycott, while others shutter with the thought. All were inspired by the Israeli and Palestinian peacemakers in the film “The Billboard From Bethlehem,” and everyone was excited to cross barriers, join with other faith traditions, and paint a sign like the one in the West Bank painted in the film.

Physically painting the sign builds life, hope, and connections that are needed for peace work. After painting in the West Bank, one of the Israeli Combatants For Peace exclaimed “This was really fun; I think it is the first fun thing we have ever done.”

In New Haven, members of Mosques synagogues and churches each raised \$500 for the Combatants For Peace, and each team had a great time breaking the barriers that divide and limit our creative options for peace and justice.

I believe people long for this work. One week after painting the first sign, I set up a blank canvass at New Haven ‘s Mayday Festival. In just three hours, random volunteers read our sandwich signs, joined us and painted the second sign. Their work, now up on the highway, broadcasts this daily message of hope to 100,000 Connecticut drivers.

Bruce Barrett is founder of www.IWagePeace.Org, director and producer of the Award Winning Documentary “The Billboard From Bethlehem.”

