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# Peace through Grease

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This month Bikes for the World welcomed a group of students visiting the United States on a mission to build peace. The selected participants came from Israel and Palestine and were brought together through Jerusalem Peacebuilders based out of Houston, Texas. This year Jerusalem Peacebuilders partnered up with Cyprus Friendship Program, who we have worked with for many years, and that's how we all ended up in the same room together.

Just like the Cyprus Friendship Program, this crew of newly trained 'bike mechanics' were paired up, one Israeli and one Palestinian, and hosted by a local American family. The idea is show each side how very similar we all are. In fact they learned that we are all more alike than we are different, something they hadn't much considered before. Within the group of eleven who visited the DC area and BfW, each had an opportunity to help load the container, move bikes, and work on prepping the bikes for the shipment. Here at Bikes for the World we spread the grease around.

While the teens were in America they worked on leadership building activities and visited many humanitarian organizations and faith communities. The idea is to create a better future for humanity across religions, cultures, and nationalities. The person to person encounters provide transformative experiences that are forbidden at home.

Here under our roof, we asked them to work together to help us meet our global mission of transforming lives through bicycles. Lots and lots of bicycles. The team helped us load more than 450 bikes for our partner Village Bicycle Project in Ghana and they prepped nearly half that for the container we would load the following day. Throughout the session they assisted each other in the container and trained and mentored each other in our processing room as shifts changed.

Before coming to DC, the Jerusalem Peacebuilders worked together as an even larger group in New England earlier in the month. There, they participated in workshops, attended lectures, visited interfaith communities, and continued their humanitarian impact working with other non-profits. The exercises brought the group together to explore ideas and beliefs in the hopes of changing attitudes. Upon returning home, they took souvenirs of inspiration and understanding that will help build a more peace driven future.

Bikes for the World was visited last week by the Jerusalem Peacebuilders who joined us in the warehouse to help us prepare bikes for Ghana.



I love this experience because I got the chance to hear a lot of different opinions that are different than mine. It's helping me expand my way of thinking. It was really powerful and meaningful because we don't usually hear each other's stories.

— Ryan Jerusalem Peacebuilders participant

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