

New Story Leadership for the Middle East: The Future Finds a Voice

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Seekers Church is providing a place in Washington DC to support the operations of [New Story Leadership \(NSL\)](#). NSL seeks to inspire a new story of possibility for the Middle East by bringing outstanding Israeli and Palestinian students to Washington DC for an extensive eight week course to learn about leadership, negotiation and narrative technique.

The Eyes to See, Ears to Hear, Peace Prayer Mission Group along with Kate & Billy Amoss began building a relationship with New Story Leadership in 2010 when we responded to an invitation to an inaugural public event that featured [Noa Baum](#) telling her powerful story “A Land Twice Promised.” We were responding to our shared interest with many in Seekers who are concerned about building peace between Israel and Palestine.



Paul Costello, the co-founder of NSL describes the vision this way:

NSL creates the space and the conditions for a new story to be told by a new generation of the most promising young Palestinians and Israelis. By training them to share their hopes in compelling narratives, they cease being the object of others' decisions, and emerge as authors of a new way

forward. They pave the way for that day when the world finally recognizes them as the primary stakeholders of any future story about Israel-Palestine. Through the NSL program, young people whose future is being determined will finally show up in the story, and America will hear from them first hand about their aspirations, plans, and efforts to build a just and lasting peace.

The NSL constant has been bringing ten young people, five each from Israel and Palestine (both West Bank and Gaza), to a summer program in the Washington Metropolitan Area. Visa issues have been significant for some, while some of the participants are young people who are attending universities in the United States or Europe. Participants are in their early to mid-twenties, some beginning college students and some with degrees.

A. NSL was developed by Paul Costello around a model of storytelling and diverse activism that he used to good value during the sectarian violence in Ireland and then in South Africa. "Graduates" from the Ireland and South Africa programs are an important part of the leadership of NSL and are currently critical to administering the current program.

New Story Leadership has evolved over the last three years in several ways. " The first 2 years of the program paired Israeli and Palestinian students in host family homes to build relationships, worked with individual stories, and had the students interning with members of Congress and nonprofits on the hill, not unlike many summer programs The students in this 3rd year are still paired Palestinian and in host family homes to build relationships, but the emphasis on storytelling has many new dimensions that build on expanding innate and learned leadership and advocacy qualities. Through a series of narrative storytelling seminars, led in some aspects by the students themselves, the interaction is now in an intimate

setting that engages members of the Seekers and wider community. Most importantly is that each student has brought to the group a project they developed as part of their application process that incorporates each students' particular talents in a peace building effort to take back with them. Through the whole summer process the individual projects may shrink or grow, merge with another student's project to become more viable and expand its dimensions, and becomes a sustainable NEW STORY that also captures support and encouragement from US communities and individuals.

Eyes to See's and the Amoss' active involvement with the summer program began when attending an event for NSL at Potters House in 2010 and engaging Paul Costello in an engaging conversation. As we slowly built relationships, our interests and prayers led us into some involvement with individual participants; with providing Paul a venue where he could bounce ideas he was working with and where the Amoss' and Eyes to See members could provide Paul with input and ideas as well as emotional support for his journey; with offering Interplay as part of the program starting in 2011, with Billy and Kate Amoss as leaders; by individually offering financial gifts, and supporting Gifts from the International Giving line in the Seekers Budget (\$4,000 in 2013). This year Seekers is also providing office space in the small office on the second floor of the house as well as access to other spaces. NSL is making lots of use of this space including use of the worship space for the weekly seminar series referred to above that has had 25-30 participants in each of the first three events. Trish has circulated dates for this series and Seekers are invited to come for free.

NSL is once again offering public story telling events at the French Embassy, at the Johns Hopkins School for International Studies, at an interfaith gathering at Bradley Hills Presbyterian Church, in a Congressional setting, and at a worship service of Seekers. The stories are moving and all

are invited. As Paul Costello says," NSL is now becoming part of the Seekers story."

Eyes to See continues to pray for Paul and for the participants, to be thankful for the partnership with Kate and Billy, and we hope to be able to continue with advisory and support activities as Seekers contributes to the emerging NSL story of creative interventions for peace in Israel and Palestine.

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Pat Conover and Sandra Miller