

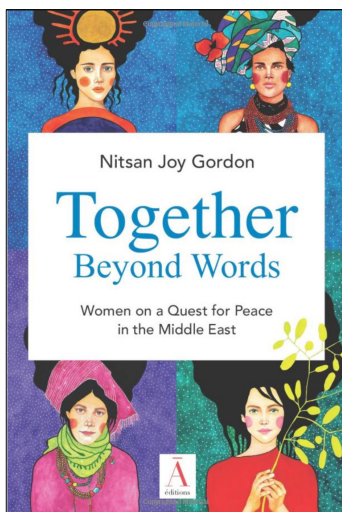
## BOOK REVIEW

# Together Beyond Words

*Women on a Quest for Peace in the Middle East*

by Nitsan Joy Gordon

Lisa Monagle



**A**s a child, I was inextricably drawn to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; it felt like the “mother of all conflicts” at the center of the world. Perhaps I was drawn to the hope that “adults with expertise” in the world would resolve the issues. And yet over time it felt so hopeless, like the never-ending violent conflict I experienced in my home, which affected my own feelings of safety, self-worth, and aliveness.

In her book, *Together Beyond Words; Women on a Quest for Peace in the Middle East*, Nitsan Joy Gordon shares her life’s work not as an expert in conflict resolution, but as a mother sitting in a bomb shelter with her children. She envisioned creating peace and a better world for all the children. There and then she made the decision to trust her skills, feel all her feelings, and to try to know the “enemy.” It was a conscious choice, a courageous one, and one to which she invites each of us to bring our skills and souls.

In this profound work, Nitsan shares her methods and wisdom tools, which are implemented together with co-facilitators in Israel and Palestine, as well as with colleagues Ann Bradney, Richard Schwartz, Pauline D’Arcy, and through Esalen and the Omega Institute, to name a few. Along with supporters and numerous peace groups, she truly creates a world village. Through movement, listening, touch therapy, and many other

empowering body-based modalities, we are invited to join in with the belief that human beings are powerful and have innate wisdom, and that all our voices and skills are needed in the world's collective healing.

I had the privilege of attending a Together Beyond Words/Radical Aliveness workshop with Nitsan Gordon and led by Ann Bradney. At the paradise of the Omega Institute, thousands of miles away from the conflict, a car backfired, and within a millisecond, half of the participants dove for the ground, and the other half hunched over in fear. I witnessed what is automatically carried in the body for these women daily, no matter how "safely far away" they are. In front of me, I could feel on a somatic level how we carry intergenerational trauma in our bodies and nervous systems. Nitsan quotes Father Richard Rohr, "Pain that is not transformed is transmitted." She goes on to describe in detail how the Together Beyond Words process has worked to create a world that felt like a safe place. What I experienced in that room was deep hatreds, trauma, and pain being held, hearts cracking wide open, and, ultimately and almost shockingly, our group *embodying* the shared desire for peace and the good of the world.

The work is no easy task. I was touched reading that at times the workshops/gatherings could only take place in Palestine (the Occupied Territories) because sometimes the Palestinian participants were not allowed entry into Israel. Three languages were involved, requiring translators so their "mother tongue" could be spoken. I tried to imagine how it was for the facilitators who found themselves in real time racing for the bomb shelter when an air raid began right before their scheduled workshop. Here is a world of courage, of heart, of a life-and-death commitment to peace, to never giving up. Nitsan writes: "When this transformation occurs, and it shall one day, we will truly be a holy spot on earth where an ancient hatred has become a present love. May it be so." Amen.

Reading this powerful book, I could see that every voice is invited and NEEDED. We have a choice to not wait for the "experts" to resolve the conflict, but to enter a place of "not knowing openness" and heart-based curiosity, so that we might bring our own deep desire for life-giving human connection. When we know we have our own "adult Self" innate leadership, there is never-ending hope. Thank you Nitsan for lighting the candle and sharing this empowering, life-changing, and life-giving work. YES!! to this energy.



**Lisa Monagle** has been long interested in "life's bridges" and bonding connections. She has worked as a nurse-midwife and hospice nurse in different countries, and completed her doctorate in cross-cultural aspects of women's health. Through her training at the Radical Aliveness Institute, and the International Radical Aliveness program, she felt empowered to work with her deep belief in the possibility of individual and community healing through the powerful Radical Aliveness process methods she learned. Using somatic techniques to access the body's fullest wisdom, Lisa invites deep and full expression of all of we are in the search to "know self" and connect with others authentically. She encourages each client to live from their deepest passion, and to bring their unique gifts as part of a world community. Lisa has a private practice in Santa Fe, New Mexico and is soon to be a Grandmother!