

The Oleander Initiative

From Beirut to Jerusalem...to Hiroshima? The Middle East, Peace Building and Japan's "City of Peace"

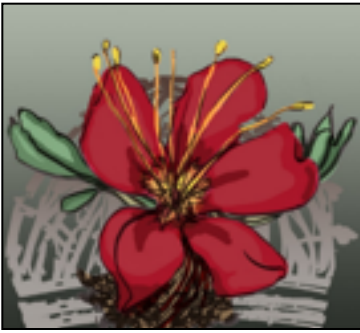
Ray Matsumiya has worked in public diplomacy and peacebuilding in the Middle East region since 1997. During this time, his organization, the University of the Middle East Project (UME) has implemented 45 programs in the United States, Spain, Morocco, Jordan, Lebanon, and Egypt for over 2500 educators and civil society leaders. However, during UME's 20-year history, no program has been more effective than one implemented in a most surprising location – Japan.

In 2016, UME implemented the Oleander Initiative - a program that gathers high school teachers from throughout the Middle East/North Africa (MENA) region and the US to Hiroshima, Japan to co-design peace education projects for their students. Over the past three years, the "lessons of Hiroshima" have resonated deeply in the MENA region and Oleander educators have gone on to impact tens of thousands of students in their home countries.

This presentation will explore why the Oleander Initiative has been so successful including: the political/cultural perceptions of Japan in the MENA region, the intercultural dynamics of American and Middle Eastern participants interacting in the third culture of Japan, and the unique qualities of the "City of Peace" that make it a particularly effective location for peacebuilding programs.

A brief description of the Oleander Initiative can be found on the next page.

The Oleander Initiative



Months after the atomic bomb was dropped over Hiroshima, Japan, a small patch of red oleander flowers bloomed out of the irradiated rubble. Since then, red oleander has symbolized both the dangers of nuclear war and the hope of a more peaceful future. In a similar spirit, the Oleander Initiative leverages the “power of place” of the city of Hiroshima – the first city to be devastated by nuclear weapons – to harness the power of education to promote more peaceful societies.

The Oleander Initiative gathers educators from around the world to work together and **transform the lessons of Hiroshima into locally relevant and impactful peace education activities for their students.** The Oleander Initiative generates deep

awareness of the catastrophic humanitarian impacts of nuclear weapons and equips participants with unique intellectual tools to promote peace within their educational systems.

Program Description: From July 31– August 9, 2019, 20 educators from the Middle East, North Africa, US and Japan will gather together during the 74th anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, today a vibrant metropolis known as the City of Peace. During the program, Oleander educators develop lesson plans for their students informed by interactions with atomic bomb survivors, Japanese educators, and from experts on the humanitarian impact of nuclear war. These lesson plans -- fine-tuned and co-developed with Oleander staff and fellow participants during the program – are designed to have a **concrete and tangible impact on their students and communities.** After implementing their lesson plans, Oleander educators widely disseminate Oleander content within their educational systems via “train the trainer” workshops. Now in its fourth year, the Oleander Initiative has potentially **impacted over 187,000 students** in the US, Middle East, North Africa and Japan.

Organizer: The Oleander Initiative is organized by the University of the Middle East Project (UME), a US 501c 3 non-profit, non-partisan organization that builds bridges through education. Since its inception in 1997, UME has implemented 45 programs for over 2500 educators and community leaders. These programs have been co-organized with prestigious agencies such as the U.S. Department of State, UNESCO, the UN Alliance of Civilizations, and the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Endorsements: Endorsements include: Kazumi Matsui, Mayor of Hiroshima, Tomihisa Taue, Mayor of Nagasaki, US Senator Edward Markey, Farouk EL-Baz, prominent Egyptian scientist, and Henry Rosovsky, Former Acting President of Harvard University and Order of the Sacred Treasure (瑞宝章) recipient.

Program Activities:

- Instruction from top academics in the fields of peace education and nuclear weapons issues
- Testimonials from *hibakusha* atomic bomb survivors
- August 6th atomic bombing memorial ceremony hosted by the city of Hiroshima
- Educational collaborations with teachers and students from Hiroshima
- Visits to Miyajima and Hiroshima Castle
- Rich cross-cultural activities between Middle East, US and Japanese participants
- Attendance at the World Conference against A & H bombs, the oldest and largest of its type
- Personalized guidance to assist development of educational activities best suited for Oleander educators’ local contexts
- Cultural Activities including Kagura performance, tea ceremony, and calligraphy

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Oleander Initiative Letters of Support



Kazumi Matsui has been serving as Mayor of Hiroshima since April 2011 and was re-elected to the post in April 2015. He also serves as the president of the multinational non-governmental organization Mayors for Peace, comprised of mayors from over 6,600 municipalities in 160 countries/regions around the world, with a goal of accomplishing everlasting world peace and nuclear weapons abolition. Mr. Matsui's father is an atomic bomb survivor.

Henry Rosovsky is the former Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences at Harvard University. In 1984 the French government made him a Chevalier of the Legion of Honor and in 1988 he was awarded the Order of the Sacred Treasure (Star) by the Government of Japan.



Farouk El-Baz is the Research Professor and Director of the Center for Remote Sensing at Boston University. Previously he worked with NASA to assist in the planning of scientific exploration of the Moon, including the selection of landing sites for the Apollo missions and the training of astronauts in lunar observations and photography.

Edward Markey, represents the state of Massachusetts in the U.S. Senate. Since the 1980s when he was involved in the national Nuclear Freeze movement, and as the founder of the Nonproliferation Caucus, Senator Markey is one of the leading voices in nuclear arms control.



"The goals of this project are exactly the same as the desires of the citizens of Hiroshima. I hope that this idea will be cultivated, take root and blossom throughout the world." - *Kazumi Matsui, Mayor of Hiroshima, Japan*

"Having spent more than a decade living, studying and researching in Japan, this project combines two of my own personal interests—Peace in the Middle East and the history of modern Japan. With that as a background I can say with confidence that this is a most promising initiative." - *Henry Rosovsky, Dean Emeritus, Faculty of Arts & Sciences, Harvard University*



For more information, visit www.ume.org and contact University of the Middle East Executive Director Ray Matsumiya at RayMat@ume.org