

>>STEPHANIE STARK: Hello, everyone. Welcome to Hadassah's next session in the Defining Zionism speaker series. My name is Stephanie Stark and I'm a web producer and social media manager here at Hadassah. Our series was developed to create an opportunity to explore Zionism through various perspectives. We know there are many definitions of Zionism and that we certainly may not all agree. The goal of this program was to create a safe space where we can all discuss various aspects of Zionism in a respectful way. We ask that you listen and that you're respectful of others. For those of you in the life audience we ask you write your questions and cards and for those online if you haven't already, can you please register with the Livestream so that allow you to type in your questions. If you're logged in you can type in the questions in the chat box on your screen and we'll pass them along. Throughout our series we've been talking to leaders about Zionism and different interpretations and it's relevance today. Today we're going to get a little bit more personal. I'm happy to introduce Sarri Singer. She's recently been in the news, one of 300 plaintiffs suing over 24 attacks attributed to Hamas which they say had an account at the bank. She was on a bus in 2003 when a suicide bomber. Later she founded Strength to Strength which is an organization that brings together victims of terrorism from around the world. With rising threats in the Middle East and Europe and our own reflections here in New York with the and anniversary of 9/11 coming up we're going to talk about her personal and political views. Welcome to Sarri and I'll give the microphone to you.

>> SARRI SINGER: Thank you so much. Wonderful to be here. I had a special place in my heart for Hadassah. I'm extremely, extreme grateful for everything that Hadassah

did for me through probably the most difficult thing I've ever been through. I want to go back because 11 years ago was the attack. Before then on the morning of 9/11 I worked about two blocks away from the World Trade Center. On that morning I lived in Manhattan and overslept and when I went to turn the TV on to see the weather, I saw the towers burning. I called my office and they said we're being evacuated. For three days I didn't leave my apartment. And I realized on this day that we really weren't safe anywhere. That something like this could happen in New York City, it could happen anywhere in the world. And basically within the next few months I made a decision that I quit my job and moved to Israel to volunteer with organizations that were working with victims of terrorism. For the first ten months I volunteered for a number of different organizations. And I loved everything that I did there but I was about to return to the States because I had very little money left and I knew that at some point I was going to have to leave. About two weeks before my flight I was offered a position in a post high school program and decided to stay. I really wanted to live life as if I was living in Israel because the first ten months I felt like I was volunteering but I had no set schedule. I continued to volunteer with the organizations but I also did my fulltime job. So it was a balance between two things. I always felt like living in Israel there were no hours in the day so I felt I was able to do both and still have that life and personal balance of everything I was doing.

And then after a year and a half of being there, on July 11, 2003, I was on bus 14 in Jerusalem when a 18-year-old Palestinian boarded the bus I was on and detonated. A little bit about that day. It wasn't typical for me. I had meetings all over Jerusalem and instead of taking busses for it to take hours I took cabs everywhere. By the time I

ended up at my office at the end of the day I had very little cash on me and I was meeting a friend for dinner in the German Colony which is about a five minute walk from my apartment. I lived about around the corner from the Prime Minister's residence, and the other corner was the President's house. So I felt like I lived in a really great area of Jerusalem, but I walked everywhere that was within walking distance. So I didn't know how to get from my office which was at the entrance of Jerusalem to the place I was going to dinner. I called my friend and said what bus can I take to get there? And she said you can catch the No. 14 bus. Catch it right after the bus station. It will take you into a place we're going to dinner. And so around 4:00 o'clock in the afternoon I left my office and took the first bus to get to the actual bus station, and then I walked over to where the 14 bus was. It was around 5:00 o'clock the bus was running late. People were getting antsy. At the end of the day with people who need to get home from work, everyone starts to kind of feed into that where's the bus already? So even though I didn't have money on me I said I'll get a cab and stop at the bank right as you enter into the German colony. As I put my hand out to hail the cab, I saw the bus 14, and I figured I had a bus pass, that would take me on the bus. I might as well not have to stop at the ATM. As I boarded the bus, I called my friend to let her know where I was. I remember the bus being packed, and I was so exhausted that day and wished that there was an empty seat. I didn't always sit on busses because usually, especially the next bus stop we were going to, there's always people getting out with a lot the packages. So I didn't want to take a seat from somebody older, but I was so tired, and there were no seats. I stood by the back door and as we pulled up I saw two seats open up in front of me. I said you know what, let me sit down and normally I would have sat by the aisle. For

some reason I moved in and sat next to the window. I know if I didn't take that window seat I wouldn't be here today. And I'm going to explain in the next few minutes what happened but I like to preface to anybody who hears my story that what I'm about to share with you is not something that should scare you but empower you to show you how amazing Israel and the people are, even in something so terrible there's so much good that can lap. So I ended up moving in and I remember the girl sitting next to me and her boyfriend was standing. I remember the bus getting really, really packed. As we ended up starting to move, I decided let me put my phone away. I don't know why. I just didn't want to hold it. It was a big cell phone at that time. Not the pocket ones we have now. And as I went to put the cell phone away, and lift up my knapsack, within seconds a felt a huge shock wave. The only way I can explain it, like two pieces of metal that hit so hard against each other and vibrate back that's what I remember. My hands were being pushed down and almost like slow motion but my body was being pushed back as hard as it could against the seat. When the blast stopped, I couldn't open up my left eye because it had already been swollen shut from something that had hit it from the bus, and my right eye I could barely open just enough to see the roof of the bus had fallen in and the man's head in front of me, and he wasn't moving. My ears started ringing. Before that there was a split second of silence after the blast. And the silence isn't like that beautiful summer evening, it's literally the silence around you and it's a split second but feels like so much longer. After that silence my ears started ringing loud and I started screaming. Luckily I was screaming because there was a man outside who heard me screaming, and he said that I had to get out of the bus and I told him I couldn't. And I always when I hear the story of him running to the bus, he was

three blocks away, he heard something, he didn't know what it was, and he came running because in Israel when there's a situation going on, a problem, the Israelis run to the problem. Here we're taught when there's a problem, we as civilians need to go and get cover and needed police or firemen to go to take care of the problem. In Israel it doesn't matter who you are, everybody comes running because that's who they are. This man heard something, didn't know what it was, and he came running to help. And he told me I needed to get out of bus and I said I couldn't. And he said put your feet up on the bar and I thought it was the window of the bus, but later I saw pictures, it was the bottom of the bus that had blown out from the impact and somehow he was able to squeeze me through with another man and they brought me to the side of the road where this old woman was waiting with me. I thought she's not the police, it's as if she's my mother waiting with me while I'm burned and bleeding for help. This is really the essence of the people of Israel that we don't hear about. When you are alone without family around you, you have everybody around you because they're there for you as if they are part of your family. And so this woman waited with me until I got into the ambulance. And I remember talking to the person in the ambulance. She was trying to keep me awake and said you need to stay alert. And immediately after that I was brought into Hadassah Hospital. In Israel, especially in Hadassah, when you get into the hospital, all the politics go out the window. It's about a human being, a human life, and saving that life. No one is any different than next person. They're all about making sure everybody gets the same care. For me that was the most important thing, that it didn't matter who I was, where I was from, who anyone of my family was, it was about me and needing help and taking care of me the best possible way to save my life.

That's what I felt happened in the hospital when I entered Hadassah. I was evaluated, I was what was considered lightly injured, but for American standards definitely would not be that. I had shrapnel in my left shoulder, both ear drums were burned, my hair was burned, face was burned and bruised, my legs were cut up, I have two pieces of shrapnel in my mouth that are inoperable. That's lucky. And so I was waiting in the hospital and I told the doctors and nurses I didn't want a stranger to call my parents because none of these people knew what I looked like before the attack and I didn't want a stranger to tell them I was really okay so I wanted to wait until a family friend had come to the hospital so somebody could let them know. She really took amazing care of me to make sure that I was really taken care of until I got into surgery. As I was waiting to go into surgery, I was asking my boss and some people there about some of the other people that were with me and they said don't worry did it, take care of yourself. And at that point within that first hour before anybody arrived that I knew I remember that there was this old Israeli woman who said her son was a soldier on the bus, he remembered getting on the bus with an American girl talking on her cell phone. He was a few rows down and said go check on her, maybe she doesn't have any family and she's by herself. I thought here's a 18 or 19 yearold kid, doesn't know me, never had a conversation with me, doesn't know my name. He's injured and he's sending his mother to check on me because this is the essence of who the people in Israel are all about. That when you're alone you're really not alone, you have family all around you and that was a scenario for the next hour. Another man came in and said my daughter was on the bus, seated behind the bus driver, she's in surgery, I speak English. If she were by herself I would want somebody to take care of her what can I

do. All these people have family members that are injured and they were this checking in on me and I was so grateful for everybody that was around me in such a time where I didn't really know what was going on and I didn't know what was wrong with me and I didn't know what to expect and a lot of it was shock and trauma and not knowing what the next thing was going to happen. I remember a porter came in from the papers to ask me some questions. And as my mother liked to say so nicely the one thing that didn't stop working after the attack was my mouth. So I definitely answered some of his questions and then as I answered my boss pulled the reporter aside and said, by the way, her father is a New Jersey state senator and basically my life became an open book and I learned a lot of interesting things I didn't know about myself before in the news. So don't believe everything you hear. Then it all started. Because at around 11:30 that night I went into surgery, but as I came out at probably 3 o'clock in the morning I was told at some point I was going to be doing a press conference that Barbara had arranged and they were going to take care of me. Before my father arrived that morning, I ended up doing a press conference in the hospital. I was asking about the people on the bus with me, especially when my father arrived, I remember he wanted some alone time with me and my brother came with him. My mother couldn't make the actual trip initially because her passport had expired. She couldn't actually get on flight and then when I did speak with her after surgery I told her I didn't want her to come because she had never been to Israel before and my father had been there so many times, but my mother was always with us growing up. I didn't want her to come to a place that I loved so much and her first memory to be of a hospital room. So I told her asked if she would stay in the States and when we had a chance I want to take her

on a prior trip to Israel to see the place I love so much. After a lot of arguing she definitely agreed to it. But within that time of trying to understand and just get myself together about what it happened because some of it seemed like it was just a bad dream and then other parts of it I don't even remember within the hospital itself, with but I do remember asking about the people and wanting to know how they're doing because I remembered the faces of the people at the bus stop with me. About two days later when my room was a little bit quiet I asked the nurse to turn on my television and I saw the news the faces of the people that did not survive. I remembered them in the bus stop. 16 innocent people were murdered that day and over a hundred of us were injured and there was one American on the bus who did not survive, Alan Beer, originally from Cleveland. Everyone standing around me didn't survive. They said the terrorist was approximately two people away from where I was seated and the doctors aren't sure how itches able to get out with the injuries I did.

I was in Hadassah for about 12 days, and while I was in the hospital I had a lot of visitors and really the way it works in Israel the hospitals is that if you want company and you want people to visit you, then it's okay as long as they're not dangerous. And for me, I didn't want to turn anybody away. Anyone who came to my door, whatever hour it was, I always would talk with them and wanted to see them because they made the effort to come see me. But most amazing thing I found about the experience were the nurses and doctors at the hospital and the care I received and the concern that was given for me. It wasn't about the media, it was the care to make sure I was better. And even I remember when I left the hospital, and I remember talking to the social workers there and psychologist and I made a decision that even though my father was very

adamant that I return immediately to the States, I decided I wanted to stay for an extra five days. I didn't want to be afraid to return because I made that decision after the attack that I was not going to be afraid to come back to Israel. I was not going to let that 18-year-old Palestinian instill fear in me. Terrorism wants to instill fear. I was determined I was going to go back to the States for the summer and return in September. I didn't want to be afraid to go to all the streets I had gone to previously. So a nurse would accommodate to my apartment in the morning and check my stitches and make sure I was okay to go out. Help me get dressed. A very difficult thing being someone so independent and then having to rely on everybody to help me with everything. It was quite frustrating. But when I ended up doing was going out one day I went to the mall, the next day for lunch, and then my last day there I walked from King George street to where the attack happened. I wanted to be there. I wanted to see and I wanted to see that the site was exactly as it was before the attack which it was. My father even said that the next day when he went there, that it didn't even look like there had been a terrorist attack because in Israel the resilience there is we have to get back to life as quickly as possible so they make sure everything is taken care much as quickly as possible. It was important to be at the site and know that I could go back to that street when I returned two months later.

So June 26th I boarded a flight back to the United States. I spent the first few weeks in bed and then went to the Washington, D.C. where I spoke at a congressional hearing as well as the different members of congress to try and make them understand better what was going on in Israel and how to protect America better after 9/11 and after things that were happening. Then I basically spent the next few weeks resting and

seeing doctors in the states. On September 3rd I boarded a flight back to Israel to resume life and living there.

I didn't want to be afraid, to not go back. I loved every minute of living there. As the year went on and some medical issues weren't being where I wanted, I decided that I needed to return to the United States. In June of 2004 I returned here.

I still was very engaged in helping with victims of terrorism and speaking for a lot of different organizations including Hadassah.

And then within the years I just have become more active in talking and trying to help and advocate for victims rights. Especially in this country, it's very difficult for victims to get what they need. So a few years ago I founded an organization called Strength to Strength where we bring victims of terrorism together globally to help them heal and move forward with their lives. Terrorism doesn't discriminate. It can happen anywhere at any time. It's really our responsibility for everybody in the world to come together, especially those of us that have been directly impacted by terrorism, to make sure we do something to help stop the hate. And we found that working with all these different countries, we works with Israel and France and Spain and England and Ireland and Kenya, we started working with Australia, Italy, we find there's so many people out there that don't have the support they need. The best thing is who better to give the support and help victims are those of us who have been impacted. We come together to try and help everybody with whatever might be going on psychologically and want to build a future for the next generation so they're not traumatized from what their family members have been through. We're just doing really incredible things and showing that human beings really can be there for each other, that even though people want to help

and there's a lot that people can do, when you're directly impacted by this especially terrorism best people to help are those who have been through it because we can understand and there are things we can say that other people may not be able to. I feel that from everything I've been through I feel very blessed that whatever I've been through, I'm able to be a voice for those who can't share their stories. I'm able to do what I can do and live my life in their memory for those who are no longer here and those that can't talk about what happened to them. I truly believe that's why I survived. Because it doesn't make any sense. Sometimes terrorism doesn't make sense to us as to why some people are okay and some aren't. But to me there's no question in my mind that god was watching out for me that day and that my time here wasn't yet up and that there's more than he wanted me to do. So my biggest thing today is to take every opportunity in front of me to make sure that I am doing something in memory of those people on my bus that are no longer here today and also for those on my bus that can't share and for victims all over the world that don't have the opportunities and the ability to get the help they need, they need somebody to be there for them to be able to say this is what this person needs. We see this all over the world. Whether it's Pakistan or victims in Mumbai, a lot of them don't have resources in their countries. So we're trying to build and help these countries, we work with Uganda, trying help them because there's no support there. It says something about the fact that a lot of things I've learned is because of what I learned in Israel. And what I learned there has helped me to bring that to other countries when I'm speak at conferences I don't feel I'm I'm not only representing myself as a mesh but Israel and every conference that I've spoken to around the world. Hopefully people can see that Israel is the answer to helping people

move forward, we need to be a part of the solution. It's not just about one country but every country. I'm honored to be here and be able to talk about my experience. It really represents thousands and thousands of people all over the world who have been through what I have been through and hopefully with you listening and understanding better, you can do more to help them and make them feel even though you don't know them, that there's somebody 6,000 miles away that cares about them just because they're another human being. With that, if there's questions, I would love to answer them.

>>STEPHANIE STARK: Thank you for sharing your story. I have to make one announcement. Due to a technical glitch, some of you may not be able to use the text chat box. So email your questions to PRAZE at [Hadassah.org](mailto:PRAZE@Hadassah.org). Our team has noticed that you are optimistic and positive. Were you that positive before? Or is that something that

>> SARRI SINGER: I'm not always positive. I have good and bad days. I think that if I didn't feel this way, then the terrorists win. They want us to not be able to function and to be able to do things that we normally do. They want to hurt us. And if you don't I'd rather look at it of the good things that came out of my experience and the amazing things that I learned about myself and about Israel and the people there that to focus on the bad things because that day was all about hate. That's not how I want to live my life. I want to do the opposite of what that day was all about. I want to make sure I'm showing love and kindness to people and making sure that that young 18yearold boy who was indoctrinated and brainwashed by Hamas, that I'm doing the opposite of what

they wanted him to do and bringing other people to learn about the good in the world and not the bad. Maybe if something I say changes somebody's mind about doing something negative, that's more important in making that impact to make the world a better place.

>>STEPHANIE STARK: That's kind of along the lines, we it's said that when you overcome a tragedy you ultimately makes it happier or more satisfied, like what doesn't kill you makes you stronger. Do you feel like that is applicable for you?

>> SARRI SINGER: I sort of actually think my story is more the saying man plans and god laughs because I always think he's laughing at me because I can plan as much as I can, but these things come about that you have no control over. It just shows you who really controls the world to me. I feel like as much as what doesn't kill you makes you stronger, I like that, I just think that I'm trying to plan and god is laughing, saying, no, this is what you need to be doing. I don't care if you want to do this. This is what you're doing. I kind of feel like he's driving me in this direction.

I think also in terms of the stronger part the reason why I was able to recover the way I did is because my parents are very strong people, and I do believe that a lot of that strength and support that I got afterwards really helped me to be where I am today. I have a very strong support system of friends and family and I think that helps to make it make you get through this type of trauma. The less support system you have the harder it is. So having two parents that are very strong willed and strong people did help me in terms of pushing me to get better and pushing me to do things and not being the victim. But really being the survivor. And really looking towards the future and not

looking towards the past.

>>STEPHANIE STARK: How did your priorities change after the attack?

>> SARRI SINGER: So people always ask me that and I remember when I first came back, I was always saying we have to reprioritize our thinking. On what's really important. I think that when I said those things publicly in speaking to communities it was because I was also trying to reinforce those things in myself. I definitely have reprioritized things different, spend more time with family than I did before. I value it more. Sometimes we don't value our parents as much until something happens and realize how important they are to us and how much they do for us. And I think that this experience just made me realize how important family and friends are and how they have to be at the top of our priority list. And I think that I have a better balance now than I did. I was always running on a hundred miles an hour doing everything, and I realized I can't do everything but I have to pick the most important things that are priorities and that's focusing on my job and working with victims of terrorism and family and friends and then everything else comes after that.

>>STEPHANIE STARK: So you told us that you do ride a bus here in New York. So on the bus and when you hear about Hamas's violence in the news today, how do you overcome your fear?

>> SARRI SINGER: So it's interesting. In Israel for the first year when I lived there, I took on a second job to pay for cabs because I couldn't get back on a bus. I was determined and my parents thought that if we don't pay for her cabs she's not going to go back to Israel. I told them that's not going to happen and I took on a second job and

but I think here in the U.S., I think that my feeling is that if something is going to happen it's going to be on the subway system so I rarely take a subway. Nine years ago three years ago when it was my nineyear anniversary of the attack, I was in Israel on my last day, and I was visiting Hadassah because every time I go back I go to visit the nurses and doctors that took care of me to thank them. There's all amazed every time I show up because they keep thinking what's this crazy American girl coming back to thank us for. I just want them to know how much I appreciate everything they did for me, especially the nurse who's now the head of the children's hospital, she thinks it's the weirdest thing that I keep coming back and bringing her presents. I was meeting with Ron Kromer at the hospital and also very close with him when I was living there. And he said to me, so, have you gotten back on a bus here yet? And I said no. He said what are you waiting for? I'm like I can't. He's like yes you can, it's been nine years. And so I said to him thinking that he wouldn't take me up I said if you come with me, I'll go on. And he said okay. And then but I'm leaving for New York in three hours and he's like it's okay, we'll do it. So I said okay, he said, can we bring a photographer and capture the moment? I said absolutely. So I met him with a friend of mine and my friend Shelly who also survived a terrorist attack in Israel and my mom and his kids, and a whole entourage of us stopped the bus on king George because I wanted to go back on a route that I was supposed to go on that day and since it's now the light rate I had to take a bus going to King George. So he stopped the bus driver and he told him the situation. And the bus driver wouldn't take money from any of us. So I got on the bus and started walking, and he's taking pictures and the people on the bus were like what's going on? I said, well, nine years ago I was on a No. 14 bus. And they're like where

were you sitting? There was a girl sitting where I was sitting. She said, You have to sit here. So I took the seat back where I was seated, and it was amazing. I thanked Ron afterwards because it was his push that really made me overcome that fear that even though I only went two stops on the bus, the second I stepped off I beat the terrorists because the second I stepped on I over came that fear that he wanted me to have.

So for me, that was the most amazing part of it. So even if I never get back on a bus in Israel again I know that I already accomplished so much in that few minutes on the bus with Ron and Avi and the other people there. It was amazing for me. I think it also made me realize that I'm a lot stronger than I thought I was and that I could do it. You never know if I'll get back on a bus in Israel or not. But for me here in New York, it's safety knowing that if I need to get off I have more control than on the subway. That's the reason why I take busses here more so. I hope that these fears will go away. As we see from a lot of people in 9/11 anniversary this week that a lot of these fears and posttraumatic stress disorder symptoms don't always go away. It's not an instant let's get over it. You don't get over this stuff. You learn to live with it and live your life with it and move forward but never get over what happened when it's terrorismrelated. So for me whatever I do is little steps, but I hope god willing one day when I live in Israel I want to be able to take busses on a regular base and had live life just like everybody else and not have that fear. Slowly it will come. I think that Ron's encouragement was a huge thing for me in getting me over that first hump of being able to get back on a bus.

>>STEPHANIE STARK: Have you ever reconsidered your Zionism because of the incident?

>> SARRI SINGER: I definitely want to live in Israel and raise my family there. I love it. I remember I ran a summer program for high school kids for three years to Israel before I had gone there. We always said to the kids every Jew around the world owns a piece of real estate in Israel. The Israelis are protecting our future I believe. For me it's a given that at some point I will live there and I'll have my future there but right now I'm here doing things that are important and I think that we all have to make that decision at the right time for us to be there. I do know one day we'll be here and there's no other place in the world that I'd rather live.

>>STEPHANIE STARK: I'm going to read a question from people out there. How would you define Zionism to a disconnected young American adult?

>> SARRI SINGER: I think that sometimes I think that it's hard to define terrorism to young adults. They need to go there and see the country. And they need to see what's around them and need to understand the beauty of it. I remember the first time I took my mom to Israel she didn't understand. She thought it was like this country where everyone was carrying around guns and it was like third world country. When she got there she realized she felt safer there than she did anywhere else in the world. I think that in order to show young kids what Israel really is, they need to see it. They need to meet the people and talk about it. We need to bring this up more in conversation about the importance of Israel in our lives while we're living here in the U.S. and what role it plays for us and how important it is for us not only because we're Jews because of what our history has taught us going forward. I led a trip one summer to Poland of high school kids, and when you walk into the first barrack at Auschwitz it says those who

forget history are doomed to repeat it. We need to know our history, our future as Jews is the land of Israel. The young people need to be brought there to see it. They need to understand that there are things that go on in the world and that if we don't have the Jewish homeland, that state of Israel, we don't have anything right now. That is where everything is from all of us. It's hard to put that into words for someone to young. So my feelings is in order to understand they need to see the land.

And I led a birthright trip after 9/11 and I was able to show the students the beauty of Israel through that trip. I think that it can't just be talking, it has to be showing, there has to be an action for young people to see and I think every kid should be going to Israel. I think there's nothing like it and it's life changing. .

>>STEPHANIE STARK: Along those lines, do you think someone who's never been through such a trauma as you could have such a strong Zionism and connect to Israel?

>> SARRI SINGER: It's hard to say that because there are some people that go through this and they don't feel the same way I do. And I respect everybody's opinion for how they feel about anything. But I think that but I think that I guess I think that everybody is a different perspective on it and you have to be able to, you know, see through people that are going through something difficult and that they're not saying things that other people would believe. It's because of the impact of what happened to them. Some people might not be able to express themselves the way I do. I think it's harder sometimes to balance that in terms of understanding the reality of what's going on there as to what really is going on. Because there's a lot of influences out there. The media that are distorting things for us.

>>STEPHANIE STARK: So along those lines, some younger Americans, a question from the crowd, are more concerned with the fate of Palestinians than with Israeli's right to fight terrorism. How do you respond to those people?

>> SARRI SINGER: Is the question that they don't care about the terror victims, only the Palestinians?

>>STEPHANIE STARK: Young Americans are more concerned with the fate of Palestinians than Israel's right to fight terrorism

>> SARRI SINGER: Again, I have a different perspective than maybe some of my friends within this regard. First of all, I believe that unfortunately the Palestinians are being used by Hamas, a terrorist organization. They're being indoctrinated, human rights are being violated. Young kids are being indoctrinated to carry out terrorist attacks and the world stands silent. Where are the human rights saying these children need to be taken care of when they're running camps for kids to teach them to become martyrs. They're living in a state of poverty with little education and not given the things they need, and this perpetuates the cycle of violence. Hamas wants to keep them in a state of perpetual poverty because that's what motivates what Hamas really wants to accomplish. Hamas doesn't care about them. They care about using them to be able to hurt Israel and the Israelis. So there are many Israelis that want peace and that care about the Palestinians. I could talk about hundreds of Israelis doing work to help Palestinians. The world wants to see the fighting and what the media represents. That's not accurate. I have to tell you if I could do anything today to help the Palestinian people, it would be let's get rid of the terrorist organizations and the people that are

running the show and then let's try and help them. So I think it's hard for people to understand when there's a lot of media throwing different things at them and trying to tell them things that are really not accurate. And it's hard because I speak to a lot of victims from other countries and they don't understand the conflict and feel for the Palestinians but don't realize these children are being indoctrinated. They just see what the media shows. There needs to be better report on the accuracy. There are hundreds of examples, years ago two examples I think of years ago there was the New York Times posted a picture of it looked like and the caption was Israel police beating Palestinian. This was an American from Chicago, he actually was in a taxi in the old city and some Arabs pulled him out and started stabbing him in his legs. Somehow he got away and ran and the police saved him because he looked little dark skinned, they made it out that he was a Palestinian when he wasn't. That wasn't who it was. This is the propaganda out there. There has to be a way to show the realities to the masses to say this is not real. Just because the New York Times printed it didn't mean it was accurate. That's the biggest problem. The media is so much our enemy in the sense that they're feeding us inaccurate information. You can talk about the recent conflict this summer with operation protective edge how journalists weren't allowed to tell the story and if they were trying to tell the story, Hamas was going to kill them. You could talk about ISIS, forget about even Israel for second, which is makes Hamas look like a humanitarian organization, murdering journalists from all countries that value democracy. Setting a tone so say they don't care about anything that we value and they're out to destroy the world and we need to do something to stop them and combat the media bias and put the true stories out there and understand that what we read, I

learned a lot about myself that I didn't know before, not everything out there is true and just because it's on the internet doesn't mean that's the exact picture of what's going on there. I think that people have to be more vigilant and better educated about what's going on. The hardest part for me is I really believe that the only way that there's going to be peace in the Middle East is when the next generation is educated not to hate.

Unfortunately Hamas instills this hatred and we need to educate them to not hate and to move forward and to really take advantage of the opportunities that are positive that are things happening in terms of really. Unfortunately, the media stops us from doing that.

>>STEPHANIE STARK: So in relation to the case that you have been in the media just recently, I know that there's an extent that you can talk about it, do you think that it's this avenue of combatting terrorism through banks is going to resonate?

>> SARRI SINGER: I think it's really important. I think that cutting off the finances to terrorists are the best way to combat terrorism as a victim. Because if we can stop the money supply then they can't carry out the attacks. For those that are victims I think that helping to combat and stop terror financing is the best way for us to go about this. I searched for an a few years to try to find way of what I was going to do to fight back. This to me is the ultimate way because if they don't have the funds they're not going to be successful. And I don't know any other option as to how we could do better than to really go at this head on and try and make sure that other financial institutions are not helping to promote terrorism and helping to finance it.

>>STEPHANIE STARK: Okay. I'm going to read another question.

From the crowd.

Both a member who is a cousin of Genya [phonetic] Berman and one of our staff also knew Genya. She was murdered on your bus, and both of us are confident she would be so proud of the work you're doing. Have you specifically worked with family members of those murdered on your bus and are family members largely supportive of the work that you do?

>> SARRI SINGER: So it's interesting. I think because I'm not in Israel it's harder to keep up with people there. Two years after the attack I did have dinner with the survivors that were on my bus, and I remember there were probably about 40 of us there including family members, and the social worker after dinner started off saying we are all from different countries, different places, there was someone from Russia, all different backgrounds. But we all share a common bond that bonds us for life. And every person went around or a family member to say what happened that day. I remember the youngest person that was there was a girl who at the time of the attack I think she was eight years old on the bus. So at that point she was ten. And I was the last person to speak. And it was very emotional and I said to everybody that I was really glad I was visiting really and really glad I had the opportunity to meet everybody and that I know that we might not be able to stay in touch but fact that we were able to see each other and connect just knowing that we all survived this together, and that we need to move forward and need to be able to live our lives despite that day.

But I am in touch with one of the family members of the American that was killed. I'm very close with his nephew that lives here. And I go to Cleveland I visit his mother and his brother and sisterinlaw and try and keep up with the family and I have a special

place in my heart for them.

It's interesting when you talk about the Bermans because last year I wrote an article that was posted and I got an email from a cousin in Baltimore, and she reached out and said that she was a relative and it starts the flow of me speaking to some of the children. There are three of the five children that live here in the states. I spoke to one of the daughters and it was really hard for me. I think I never felt survivors guilt until I met the family of Alan Beer in Cleveland, I walked into their home and I remember his mother holding a picture of him and saying Sarri, I'm so glad you're alive and I thought to myself this poor woman. I'm here and her son's not. I think also with the Bermans I felt a little bit of that also. My heart breaks because I don't know why I'm here and their family members aren't. I do feel that if anybody wants to connect with me, all I feel is love. I want to be in touch with the families and if there's something I can do for them or help them, I want to be there to support them. But I'm very moved that there's somebody connected here because that does mean a lot. And I know that the family was going through a rough time. As all families go through when they lose somebody they love. Through such a manipulative and calculated and vicious act as terrorism. But so I have reached out a little bit.

But it's hard sometimes. I don't push and pry. I did reach out and if they want to reach back out to me I'm so happy to be in touch with them. I don't want to be overbearing or I don't know how they feel do I remind them of the family member they don't have anymore. So I don't want to do that to them.

>>STEPHANIE STARK: That leads to do another question about your organization.

How do you connect with and then support other terrorism survivors?

>> SARRI SINGER: We work with existing organizations, people who work on the ground with victims of terrorism. There's not one organization in the world that brings all of these organizations together. We developed a program where we work with existing organizations in these countries and run programs of bringing victims together whether we bring them out to speak at conferences, we run meetings in the New York area every month called our survivors circle where family members and victims can come together in a safe environment with therapeutic and recreational activities. We also run a program called the young ambassadors program, 20 young people from different countries to New York for a week. We give them a week of sharing experiences, a lot fun, but most importantly they get to share their stories and community and political leaders and they are empowered to go home and help their community and families rebuild and move forward. We also have sponsored survivors circle meetings in other countries. There was an attack four years ago and is the first meeting we had there were 42 people who had been injured with two trauma specialists and what we heard after was in a people loved coming together and now they've set up because everyone is so far away from each other in Uganda, sets up small groups where people who live close can have that support. We're trying to empower victims to help support each other.

So we run a lot of different things. A victims retreat is coming up at the end of October bringing together 30 victims and family members that are American through the U.S. who have been in attacks all over the world coming together for a weekend for therapeutic activities, even more important they're going to come together and now build friendships with people that understand what they've been through. Some our victims

live in places on the West Coast and needed support, to have other people that they can connect with from Oklahoma City or New York or an attack from Israel. Just really it's something that gives them strength to move on. A lot of these programs are really about empowering victims and having them take on the role and helping our partner organizations build up also their victims and their confidence in moving forward.

>>STEPHANIE STARK: Can you speak a little bit more about how you think how do engage young American adults with Zionism?

>> SARRI SINGER: Sure. Again, I think that education is the key. I think there needs to be more education about what really should mean to all of us and what we should be doing and more of a connection to the land of Israel. I think most typical Americans don't feel the connection because they haven't been there but because they haven't been brought up with it. If you haven't been brought up learning with Israel and being a part of your life, you don't understand its importance. I think engaging and finding ways to connect more with Israel here in the United States and then going to Israel and seeing what you've learned about is something very important for young people.

>>STEPHANIE STARK: Okay. This is going back, one step, what are the most interesting things you've learned from being in touch with victims from so much other countries and cultures?

>> SARRI SINGER: I think that what I've learned is there's so much respect in the world and even through so much hate that I experienced that day there's so much love around the world for Israel and for what's going on. And even getting messages at this point what was going on over the summer, we received messages from our partners in

northern Ireland saying we're there with you, we support you, what can we do to help the victims?

Messages from England. I was just in London for the nineyear anniversary of the London bombs to be a part of the shown in and help survivors. All of them said we're heart broken's what's going on. What can we do? That's what it's all the about. Letting victims know that we're not alone, and that Israel is not alone. Having that support from everybody is really important. And I think there's a love for Israel out there that we're not completely aware of and definitely in the countries and people I interact with, they have a tremendous amount of respect and they would like to see peace as we all would like to see.

>>STEPHANIE STARK: So leading off that, you mentioned young Israel soldier you noticed that was look out for you as an American. What was your take from all of your time in Israel about the relationship between Israelis and the American Jewish community and the Jewish community around the world?

>> SARRI SINGER: I think that we're all responsible for each other. And I think that's what I saw in Israel is that when I was alone, I wasn't alone. They were there for me. Every person that I interacted with, every person that came in to see if I was okay, the soldier, you know, it was like he was my family and I didn't even know it. And I think that that's where it was all about for me, that there is a love for everybody. And there is this connection between Israel and America that is something very strong that people don't always realize.

I think there's a respect, I think there's a love, and I think that Israelis are so

excited when they see Americans come and visit, but it's more than that. They want us to come there and live and know that we have a there. Just because we might not understand every little thing, may not speak Hebrew perfectly and that everything is different for us, that's okay. You'll learn to live certain lifestyle there and enjoy it because of people that are around you.

I think what Israel is all about is the people. It's the heart of Israel. That's what it really is. To know that you're embraced and people wanted to help you and you always think Israelis are so tough. And they are. Tough often the outside. But mush on the inside. And they want to just help us whatever we need there. And I think that I don't know anywhere else in the world that wants us to come there more than Israelis wanting us to come and live in Israel. I get a little jealous when I see the flights of new Americans. There's nowhere elsewhere you'll be embraced and you're going home. That's what you're really doing. I think that's what's very special about Israel. And the Israeli people and how much they really care about us. That's the connection we have with them is that when we go to Israel you're going home. Everybody says it. Especially the birthright I was doing and I was the kids said I don't understand I just feel like I'm home when I'm here. That's what it's all about for us. No other place in the world where when you go to the wall in Jerusalem, I remember when I ran one of my summer programs and somebody spoke and I was talking and I said it's the only place in the world that when you touch the wall it touches you back.

There's something special there that you can't always explain into words but it's something inside of you and that you know that when you're there, that you're in the right place. That's what home is. Being in the right place.

>>STEPHANIE STARK: So I think that is a good place to call it unless anybody else has any more questions that's here or online. So thank you so much, Sarri. And if you registered for the program, we're going to be emailing you a survey tomorrow and we would appreciate if you would fill that out so we can provide programming that will satisfy your interests in the future. If you haven't already we encourage you to register for the entire defining Zionism series so you can receive news about up coming programs. The next presentation will be Thursday, October 23, 2014, featuring Rabbi Melissa Weintraub on how to reframe Israel advocacy. To register for the series you can receive reminders about up coming programs go to website and that it's recorded and can be found on our website. Thank you to the staff and volunteers that have made this program possible.