

Empower Peace Connects Long Beach, CA and Beirut Lebanon

In its latest venture to give voice to students around the world, Empower Peace connected high schools in Long Beach, California with students in war-stricken Beirut, Lebanon in its sixth international video conference.

Held on November 30, 2006, more than 100 students participated with hundreds more watching online.

What made this broadcast unique was that it took place in Beirut, Lebanon just months after a violent war and days after significant political unrest.

In the midst of the turmoil, students from the Hariri High School II and the American Community School in Beirut came together to openly share their lives with their counterparts from the Robert A. Millikan Peace Academy in Long Beach, California.

In addition to covering Empower Peace's traditional topics such as culture, religion, and school life, a significant portion of the videoconference was dedicated to current events.

Hosted by Sarah Khoury of Lebanon's Future TV, the 90-minute broadcast allowed the students in both the US and Lebanon to discuss the current political instability in the Middle East in addition to hearing different perspectives about the situation.



In fact, students from Beirut welcomed the opportunity to answer questions about the war. When asked about the summer's Israel-Lebanon conflict, Amer Dabbous from the Hariri School said, "I believe that war is never a solution to any problem. On the contrary it's a source of our

problems. For example, here in Lebanon, as a result of the war there have been thousands of deaths and mutilations, and loss of homes...When it comes to our education, we started a month late...It's a very difficult situation for all of us to study and to be focused on our daily lives."

Empower Peace also added a new segment to this broadcast called "Open-Ended." This segment had students in both locations answer the same question. This allowed students to voice their priorities while gaining an understanding of what other students around the world were thinking. For example, students were asked to name a common stereotype that they



would like to correct about their country and to talk about how pop culture influences their lives.

When an "Open-Ended" question about dating norms was posed, Millikan High School teacher and long-time Empower Peace friend, Nader Twal chimed in with some wonderful news. Twal, himself an Arab-American, discussed his dating habits and then announced his engagement! Yet another historic first for Empower Peace.

As always, this Empower Peace broadcast included video presentations and cultural presentations. Students shared day-in-the-life videos and PSA for Peace commercials. Students in Beirut also performed a cultural presentation by singing the Lebanese National Anthem.

In the end, everyone walked away excited and optimistic, and with a little more understanding of the rest of the world. Lana, a student from the American Community School in Beirut, summed it up during the broadcast. Speaking to the students in Long Beach, California, she said, "Most of us live like you do, except in a different place. We support a lot of the things you do and we can relate to you. And we are not different. We are very much the same."

To view the broadcast, or to see any of our previous videoconferences, log onto www.empowerpeace.org. ❁

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*Lana, student
American Community School in Beirut*

New and Improved

Empower Peace has launched a new and improved web site now located at www.empowerpeace.org. Log on today and see new videos and photos from our latest broadcasts, read about our exciting upcoming programs and view the "Day-in-the-Life" videos produced by EP students from all over the world.

EP to Use Cutting-Edge Technology to Expand Educational Programs

Continuing its campaign to use cutting-edge technology and the Internet to bridge the cultural divide, Empower Peace is launching two new initiatives in the coming weeks guaranteed to turn heads.

EP Radio is a bold, new program aimed at bringing interactive media directly to students' home computers. Using technology perfected by V-Brick Systems, EP Radio will broadcast interviews with prominent leaders, newsmakers, and students live over the Internet. Each guest will discuss topical issues with EP Radio hosts in an informal living-room setting. Topics include negotiating skills, public speaking, networking and overcoming obstacles. What makes these broadcasts unique, however, is that V-Brick technology allows students watching online to also participate directly in the chat by posting questions of the guests.

"What that means is students in Pakistan and Bahrain and California all can join the discussion virtually," said Tricia Raynard. "This technology allows us to connect with our students more often and continue our mission of bringing people together.

EP Radio plans on holding monthly broadcasts from its Boston offices. A full schedule will be available online at www.empowerpeace.org.

"The goal is really simple," said Rick Rendon. "We are using top of the line technology for students to learn leadership skills from our guests that they can then translate to their lives. It's a great way to promote peace and engage our future leaders."

Empower Peace's second new project is called EPTV – a 24-hour online TV station dedicated to promoting peace and cultural understanding. Working with our partner, Narrowstep, EPTV will host documentaries, talk shows, and other content geared towards Empower Peace's mission. Not only will prior Empower Peace conferences be broadcast on the channel, but student-made videos will be available to view.



Asad Butt, Director of EP Media

What makes EPTV unique is Narrowstep's user-interface. Those tuning into EPTV will have the option of watching the live 24-hour feed or viewing content on-demand.

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There is no subscription fee. Subscriptions are available by contacting: Mariam Abdo at (617) 912-3835 or info@empowerpeace.org

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*Rick Rendon
Founder, Empower Peace*

"We all know media plays a huge role in today's world," said Rick Rendon. "With EPTV, we hope to create and broadcast programming that will break down misperceptions and start discussions amongst our Empower Peace students."

EPTV will start broadcasting in February, 2007.

For more information about Empower Peace and our upcoming programs, visit our website, www.empowerpeace.org. ❁

Contributor To Peace

Dr. Norma Ghamrawi, Director of the Center for Research & Training Hariri High School II, Beirut, Lebanon



During Empower Peace's last visit to Lebanon, Dr. Norma Ghamrawi served as a driving force in making sure that our latest broadcast was a success.

Dr. Ghamrawi is a chemistry and general sciences teacher for the students who took part in the event. She is also the Director for the Center for Research and Training. In addition to her background in the sciences, Dr. Ghamrawi teaches college level courses in leadership and educational management, as well as heading several female leadership clubs. When asked to describe Empower Peace in three words, Dr. Ghamrawi said, "Pioneering, exciting, and educational! I hope that peace and mutual respect will dominate among all nations and believe that efforts such as that of Empower Peace can really make a difference!" On behalf of Empower Peace, we thank you Dr. Ghamrawi for your contribution to peace. ❁

EP in the News

- Empower Peace was recently featured on the Arab Radio and Television's (ART) Downstairs Café. The program featured Empower Peace Outreach Coordinator, Mariam Abdo, who was interviewed about EP programs, broadcasts, and upcoming initiatives.
- In early December, Empower Peace was featured on Lebanon's Future TV Morning News and in *Future Newspaper*. The news stories focused on our latest broadcast which connected students from the Hariri High School II in Beirut, Lebanon with students from Robert A. Millikan Peace Academy in Long Beach, California. ❁