TIPS FOR GETTING THE CONVERSATION STARTED

FRAME THE ISSUES USING SHARED VALUES

If they care about concepts such as equality, human rights, justice and international law, use that language! If they care about strong and vibrant Jewish communities, affirm that, and then talk about how the immorality of the occupation hurts Jews too. Point to the disturbingly blatant racism in Israeli society, the violence of the far-right, the divisions in the American Jewish community and the misplaced priorities of Jewish communal and institutional leaders. Give them a way to take a step closer and without feeling like they have to give up membership in their community.

FOCUS ON WHAT YOU CAN AGREE ON

You can then guide the conversation in the direction you want to go. Start by asking what their vision for peace in the region looks like. If they say "a place where Jews can be safe," great, affirm that and then explain that Jewish safety should not come at the cost of Palestinian lives and freedoms. If they say "two states for two peoples," you don't necessarily need to affirm or reject that desire, but can simply say "through its continued settlement construction, displacement and the network of checkpoints dividing up the land, Israel has made that impossible in the near term. We need to talk now about the urgent need for full equality, dignity and rights for Palestinians, not wait for a diplomatic solution."

REFRAME THE PROBLEM

Ask them what they think the conflict is really about, and gently disabuse them of the myths that this is an age-old conflict between two peoples who have always been at odds, that it is a religious conflict, that Israel is only the victim. Talk about what this conflict is really about: Israel as a refuge for Jewish people was created on land where people were already living, through a process which displaced and killed many of them, and now continues to grab more land and resources at the expense of the Palestinian population.

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USE HISTORICAL ANALOGIES

People resonate with stories that are already familiar to them. You don't need to over simplify or draw false comparisons to use analogies effectively to help people reframe the situation. You can talk about Palestinian demands for full equality, dignity and freedom from institutionalized discrimination through the lens of the American Civil Rights movement of the 1960s. You can make the analogy between Israel's current policies to the system of institutionalized segregation and oppression that constituted apartheid policy in South Africa. You can draw on the history of boycotts to demand political change, such as the Montgomery Bus Boycott, or the Grape Boycott

DON'T MAKE IT A COMPETITION OR A HISTORY LESSON

Try to avoid letting it become competition about who knows more about the history or whose facts are better. Shaming never works. Reframe and redirect as needed to keep the conversation centered on the moral cost of Israel's security regime and the urgent need for justice now.

VALIDATE THEIR FEARS, AND MODEL VULNERABILITY

We don't have all the answers, but we do know that things urgently need to change. Don't shame people, rather call them in to thinking about the issues in new ways.

AVOID "TRIGGERING THE FRAME"

Repeating a misconception in order to disprove it often ends up reinforcing the erroneous idea in people's minds. Don't start by refuting a claim you think they will make, start by describing your vision for change with a positive framing.

SPEAK IN A LANGUAGE THEY CAN HEAR

Don't use jargon or academic-ese. When you use buzzwords like 'apartheid' or 'colonialism' explain how israeli policies or history fulfil those definitions. Don't just use the label like a hammer to make a point, but describe how the reality of life for Palestinians under Israeli control fits those definitions/experiences.

ASK THEM WHAT THEY KNOW

Often people know less than they think they do. By simply asking calm questions and sharing facts you can help them realize that they may be missing pieces of the story.

BE CONFIDENT!

You don't have to be an expert on Middle East history to have an opinion about human rights issues in Israel/Palestine. Start with what you know, and then learn together.

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