



The Middle East Oleander Initiative



“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*





Oleander Vision

On August 6, 1945, the United States detonated a 15-kiloton uranium atomic bomb above the city of Hiroshima, Japan, killing 70,000 Japanese civilians outright and another 70,000 from radiation poisoning. Months later, a small patch of red oleander flowers blossomed in 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 **Middle East Oleander Initiative** shares the lessons of Hiroshima with educators from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region to foster a deeper understanding of the threat that nuclear weapons pose to humanity. In turn, the Oleander Initiative participants will bring these lessons home to their students across the MENA region to foster a greater awareness of the humanitarian consequences of nuclear war.

Currently, there is **no significant effort within MENA school curriculums to educate their youth about the human costs of nuclear war**. The Oleander Initiative closes this curriculum gap. The initiative focuses on secondary school teachers, individuals with the highest capacity for generating a multiplier effect in their societies. These teachers shape their students' conceptions and worldviews during their most critical, formative years. Participants will transmit the horrors of nuclear weapons to their students through lesson plans developed and fine-tuned in Hiroshima during the seven-day Oleander program, and via train-the-trainer workshops with fellow teachers of their home country. In this way, the Oleander Initiative is designed to impact approximately **500,000 students** in the Middle East region within a span of five years with the potent lessons of Hiroshima.

Oleander Details



From August 2 – 9, 2016, twelve high school teachers from the Middle East will gather in Hiroshima to learn first-hand from atomic bomb survivors about the horrors of nuclear war and from global experts about the issues surrounding nuclear weapons. The inaugural 2016 program will leverage **"the power of place"** of the city of Hiroshima—the first city to be devastated by a nuclear weapon—to help impart a deep understanding of the humanitarian consequences of nuclear war.

Each Oleander participant will arrive in Hiroshima with a draft project. Throughout the seven-day program, participants will reflect on the following question: **What is the lesson of Hiroshima?** This question will be explored from multiple angles through program activities such as:

- Testimonials from hibakusha atomic bomb survivors from Hiroshima and Nagasaki;
- Academic instruction for curriculum enhancements, classroom lesson plans, and after-school activities from top US and Japanese universities;
- Presentations from local NGOs and experts from Hiroshima;
- August 6th atomic bombing memorial activities;
- Site visits to the Genbaku Dome, Hiroshima Peace Museum and other atomic bomb sites of memory;
- Educational collaborations with teachers and students from Hiroshima; and,
- Participation in the 2016 World Conference Against Atom & Hydrogen Bombs—the world's largest and most prestigious anti-nuclear weapons conference.



Oleander Projects

As Oleander participants glean deeper insights into the lessons of Hiroshima, UME staff and faculty will provide an open academic space for participants to engage in self, peer, staff and faculty review to modify their projects. As the program progresses, participants will increasingly clarify their goals, management structure, and long-term vision of their ever-evolving projects. By the conclusion of the program, Oleander participants will design a project that conveys the horrific humanitarian consequences of nuclear war **uniquely suited for their specific, local contexts**. Actual draft student projects from Oleander participants include:

Project Title: I Will Write Peace On Your Wings

Country: Tunisia

Rationale: "Today was a bloody day in my country. ISIS has attacked civilians and military troops in the South of Tunisia two of my friends have lost family members in the attack. As witnessed many times over the past year, Tunisia is still vulnerable to unexpected and heartbreaking events. We need encouragement to move forward and to change the situation, which is characterized by social unrest and security concerns.

I think that the story of Sadako Sasaki – a Japanese victim of the bomb who before her death folded one thousand origami cranes – could teach the important lesson of resilience to my students. Sadako's story is the story of courage in the face of sadness of war. I want to show my students how resilient people can be in the face of disasters and how comforting the traditional Japanese culture was for them. I want them to know that the name Hiroshima doesn't only stand for the catastrophic tragedy of war in general, but also for a city that rose from ashes, a city rebuilt by its own citizens."

Activity Description: "I will teach Sadako's story to my students because storytelling is an ideal method to share knowledge, cultural and personal information. I will use Sadako's courageous story as an inspiration, as a tool to empower girls in my school and in my country. The project will first take place in the classroom, where I will design a lesson plan to teach resilience using Sadako's story as a foundation. I also plan to collaborate with the drama teacher to perform the story of Sadako in English. He is a well-known drama producer in Tunisia and we are working in the same school. We may create a role-play from Sadako's story to be performed in English. Following these activities, I will invite teachers from different schools to attend the lesson with the English Language Teaching advisor in my region."



Project Title: Little Boy

Country: Egypt

Rationale: "Egypt has suffered from many wars and still has struggles between its people. I want to bring the lessons of Hiroshima to my students so they can see the result of extreme war and intolerance. I hope that the lesson of Hiroshima can teach my students how to accept others from different countries, religions, races, and to appreciate values such as peace and tolerance. My project will also bring up the issue of the nuclear reactor that is planned to be built and the possible dangers associated with it."

Activities: "I will organize a picture gallery and information about the city of Hiroshima at my school. This display will be followed by a symposium. Over 300 students or more will gain knowledge about the impact of the nuclear bomb. Following this activity, I plan on organizing four additional workshops that will train approximately 100 teachers, as well as one workshop for 45 school directors."

Project Title: Take a Stand

Country: Saudi Arabia

Rationale: "The lesson of Hiroshima is that nuclear weapons should never be used again. The overall purpose of the project is to convey a message to the countries of the Middle East and the entire world about the peaceful uses of nuclear power versus its evil capabilities. I hope to educate new generations to take a stand and to challenge the current situations all over the world and push for a peaceful future."

Activities: "My project will include activities on multiple levels including a special 'Hiroshima Day' that will inform the students about what happened in Hiroshima on August 6, 1945. This special day will be supported by classes and workshops to explore this topic more fully. Lastly, drawing on my experience as a Toastmaster public speaking trainer, students will engage in a SPEAK UP competition in front of their peers at their school."

Oleander Participants



The Oleander pilot program includes teachers drawn from across the Middle East and North Africa, including Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates and the West Bank, among other states. All teachers are alumni of the Teacher Education Institute, the University of the Middle East's flagship program sponsored by the US State Department. All are fluent in English and have undergone an intensive admissions process including a lengthy written application, in-person interviews, and multiple letters of recommendation. Oleander participants are among the most motivated and dynamic educators in the region and have already made a significant impact on many of their educational systems. In addition, the majority are inspectors, teacher-trainers and upper level administrators that have the ability to create a vast multiplier effect far beyond the 150 - 300 students they teach per year.



University of the
Middle East Project

Oleander
Organizer

The University of the Middle East Project (UME) is a 501c3 non-profit, non-partisan organization that builds bridges through education. Since its inception in 1997, UME has implemented 38 academic programs in America, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Saudi Arabia and Spain on a variety of topics including critical and creative thinking, negotiation and conflict resolution, 21st century work skills, and civic engagement. These institutes have included over 2000 educators, civil society leaders and others who have impacted thousands of students throughout the Middle East, North Africa, Europe and the US. UME programs have been implemented in partnership with institutions such as the US Department of State, UNESCO, the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Spain. UME has been endorsed by prominent individuals such as Archbishop Desmond Tutu, US Secretary of State John Kerry, and praised by senior US State Department officials "to be among the best planned, managed and most effective public diplomacy efforts overseen by the Department."

For more information about UME and the Oleander Initiative, including how to support our mission, visit www.ume.org and contact UME Executive Director Ray Matsumiya at RayMat@ume.org.

Oleander
Sponsor



The Otterman Foundation
Let's Think In Global Terms

The Oleander Initiative is proudly supported by The Bernard and Sandra Otterman Foundation, a family foundation fostering peace through education. Contact Executive Director Mike Otterman at mike@otterman.org and visit www.otterman.org for more information about their mission.



"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

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