

Leadership Team

Bshara Nassar



Founder and Director

Mr. Nassar earned his undergraduate degree from Bethlehem University (Palestine) in Information Systems and Business Administration in 2010. He earned his Master's Degree in Conflict Transformation from Eastern Mennonite University (Harrisonburg, VA) in 2014. As the fourth generation of the Nassar family, Mr. Nassar was deeply involved in his family's educational farm, Tent of Nations, in Palestine, including education, communication and social media. In 2014, he founded the Nakba Museum Project, where he developed the concept, worked with artists, prepared artwork and exhibits, negotiated exhibit space, coordinated the setup of the exhibits in locations across the country, and raised funds.

He has played an integral role in educating international visitors about Palestinian rights and livelihoods. He has spoken publicly on these topics in diverse forums, including the French Embassy, John Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, and a number of churches and universities around the country. Mr. Nassar developed the concept for the Museum of The Palestinian People while working with artists and other contributors on the Nakba Museum Project. He is deeply passionate about peace building. Mr. Nassar is "a people person" who enjoys biking in Washington DC and meeting people from all over the world.

Nizar Farsakh



Chairman of the Board

Mr. Nizar Farsakh is a trainer focusing on leadership, advocacy and negotiations. He worked for two years at the Project On Middle East Democracy in DC building the advocacy capacity of Arab CSOs and before that he was the General Director of the PLO Delegation in Washington DC for two years. Between 2003-2008 he was advising senior Palestinian leaders including the President, the Prime Minister and various ministries. Nizar holds a Masters in Public Administration from the Harvard Kennedy School and a Masters in International Boundary Studies from King's College London. He is currently involved in several non-violence initiatives in Palestine/Israel and the US.

Fakhira Halloun



Secretary of the Board

Fakhira Halloun is a Palestinian citizen of Israel who is currently a Ph.D. candidate in Conflict Analysis and Resolution at George Mason University. Her doctorate specialty is in Ethnic Identity, Power, and Narrative. Her Ph.D. research focuses on the collective identity of Palestinian citizens of Israel and their discourse of struggle to achieve their collective rights.

Fakhira has acquired considerable professional experience in conflict transformation, and specializes in facilitating dialogue between mixed groups in conflict involved in cultural, political and social issues in a variety of settings. She served as a board member for Mossawa Center, The Advocacy Center for the Palestinian Citizens in Israel and worked for several years in the Center for the Advancement of Shared Citizenship in Israel.

From 2012-2015 Fakhira worked on the design and coordination of “Leaders for Democracy Fellowship” (LDF) – USA program sponsored by the U.S. State Department and implemented by Syracuse University (Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs). Once a year, this program brought civil and political leaders from the Middle East to the United States for three months to provide them with academic and practical experience in civic society, leadership, and conflict resolution. Fakhira holds a B.A. in social work and an M.Sc. in criminology from The Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Nada Odeh



Head Curator

Mrs. Nada Odeh is a Syrian artist, activist, humanitarian and a modern-day poet. She was both born and raised in Damascus and has lived in countries such as Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and has recently come to the USA in 2013 due to the conflict and revolution in her country. She lives and studies in Syracuse, New York. She had gotten her Bachelor in Fine Arts from the Damascus University and her MA in museum studies from Syracuse University, she has passion in middle eastern culture, history, and arts. She has attended many workshops in the field of visual arts, communication arts, and therapeutic arts.

Odeh has established a project commonly known as 'Nada's Picassos', which had begun in Damascus but was then later moved wherever she located. The medium she works in is Acrylics on Canvases. Arabic miniatures, Middle Eastern colors and small details of the heritage influence her artwork. The key theme in which her artwork is mainly focused on is the Syrian refugees in camps and Syrian women in exile. She has exhibited her art in Damascus, Dubai, New York City, Detroit, Toledo, Tiffin, and Washington D.C. Syracuse, Troy. Odeh started curating events and art exhibits since 2015. Her main focus in the curatorial world is to reflect social justice issues through arts, history, and exhibits.

AnaMichele Babyak



Social Media & Development Coordinator

Ms. AnaMichele Babyak holds a Bachelor of Arts in Cultural Anthropology and History focusing on Middle East Studies. She has a background in photography, community organizing and several fundraising initiatives for Palestinians, refugees and various other humanitarian causes. Her passion is to bridge the gap between Americans and Arab and Muslim immigrant communities locally, creating spaces of empathy and understanding through gatherings. Her time volunteering and participating in Holy Land Trust's 'Iktashef' program in the West Bank on a trip in 2017 ushered her into activism for Palestinians. AnaMichele's passion for re-framing and humanizing the Palestinian story brought her onto our staff team as the Social Media & Development Coordinator in June of 2018. Having grown up in the Washington, DC area, she is eager to bring Palestinian stories of hope, resilience and culture to her home city.

Lena Ghannam



Graphic Designer

Ms. Lena Ghannam is a designer and journalist. Since January 2017, she has been an instructor within the Interior Architecture department at The George Washington University's Corcoran School of Art & Design. In 2015 she was named Creative Director at the DC Palestinian Film + Arts Festival. In 2014 she was the recipient of the US Green Building Council's Greenbuild Scholarship, as well as HKS Architects Mid-Atlantic Design Fellowship. Lena was co-founding editor and later Chief Editor of Review:Amman, a quarterly periodical which showcased visual conversations on Arab art, architecture, and design. Lena holds an MFA in interior architecture and design from George Washington University and a BA in journalism from New York University.

Christopher S. Clarke, Ph.D.



Consulting Historian and Adviser

Mr. Christopher Clarke, Ph.D., is recently retired from a thirty-five-year career in the museum field. For the final 20 years of this career, he worked as a freelance consultant to museums across the Northeastern US; he also spent the 2013-14 academic year at Syracuse University, teaching full-time as a Visiting Professor of Practice in the Museum Studies graduate program. Since 2010, Christopher has served as the consulting administrative director of a philanthropic initiative that supports community-scale water and environment projects in the West Bank via local and regional NGOs.

Zeina Azzam



Adviser

Ms. Zeina Azzam is a Palestinian American writer, poet, editor, and activist. She volunteers for organizations that promote Palestinian human rights and the civil rights of vulnerable communities in Alexandria, Virginia, where she lives. Zeina currently works as Publications Editor for the D.C. think tank, Arab Center Washington. Previously she was Senior Program

Manager for Arabic language and culture at Qatar Foundation International and Director of Educational Outreach at the Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, Georgetown University. Her poems have been published in literary journals and online magazines such as Mizna, Sukoon Magazine, Hearwood Literary Journal, and Split This Rock as well as five edited volumes including Making Mirrors: Writing/Righting by and for Refugees (2018) and Gaza Unsilenced (2015). She has also collaborated with visual artists in art-poetry exhibitions. Zeina holds an M.A. in Arabic literature from Georgetown University, an M.A. in sociology from George Mason University, and a B.A. in psychology from Vassar College.

Julia Ganson

Adviser

Dr. Ganson managed international training and fellowship programs for the Middle East & North Africa (MENA) in the Executive Education Office of Syracuse University from 2008 until 2016. The programs included the Leaders for Democracy (LDF) and the Civic Education & Leadership Fellows (CELFF) programs. LDF and CELFF hosted democratic reformers and academics from 15 MENA countries, including Palestine, for three months of seminars at the Maxwell School and then for professional affiliations in Washington, D.C. Both programs were funded through the Middle East Partnership Initiative of the U.S. Department of State. During the LDF program, she traveled extensively in the Middle East & North Africa and partnered with Lebanese universities for related programs. The LDF and CELFF programs now have an extensive network of more than 300 alumni who are civil society leaders in the MENA region.

Before joining Executive Education at the Maxwell School of Citizenship & Public Affairs, she held faculty positions in departments of sociology at several American liberal arts colleges. She has worked in the field of educational evaluation as a Review Officer for the New Zealand National Government and in program evaluation for NGOs in the U.S. She has a Ph.D. in sociology from Columbia University and has been awarded a Fulbright Fellowship for teaching and research at Birzeit University, in the Muwatin Institute for Democracy & Human Rights, in Ramallah for 2017-18.

Roberta Schwartz



Grant Writer and Adviser

Mrs. Roberta Schwartz, Founder of The Persuasive Pen, is a professional grant writer and editor with considerable experience in the arts, social services and healthcare. Since 1995, she has provided grant-writing services, project oversight and implementation, and advocacy for nonprofit organizations. She has also served as Assistant Director of Foundation Relations for the University of Rochester Medical Center and as an Institutional Grants Manager at the Strong Museum. Roberta holds a Bachelor's Degree in Art History from Vassar College and a Master's of Philosophy in Art History (American Art and Architecture) from the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. Roberta was a visitor to one of MPP's traveling exhibits years ago and, as an American Jew, was greatly moved to discover Palestinian stories for the first time. This compelled her to join our team and contribute her to work towards bringing authentic Palestinian stories for the world to hear.

Rasha Natour



Communications Officer

Ms. Rasha Natour is a Palestinian-American that is passionate about helping others, promoting social justice, and exploring the world through travel and meeting new people. Rasha received her Masters in International Development and Humanitarian Emergencies from the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) where her studies and research focused on the Middle East. Before attending LSE, Rasha spent three years in the West Bank as a Fulbright Scholar and working with CARE, an international non-profit dedicated to eradicating poverty and promoting social justice. Rasha currently lives in Washington D.C. and works with CARE USA's Advocacy Department where she supports CARE offices to advocate for and with the communities CARE serves.

Mary Panzer

Co-curator and Adviser

Dr. Mary Panzer is a recognized scholar of photography and cultural history. From 1992-2000 she served as Curator of Photographs at the National Portrait Gallery/Smithsonian Institution, where she organized exhibitions devoted to 19th and 20th century photographers such as Mathew Brady, Richard Avedon, and Philippe Halsman. Since 2000, she has lived in New York, teaching adjunct at NYU. Panzer curated the collection that led to *Separate, But Equal: The Mississippi Photographs of H.C. Anderson* (2002), the first publication devoted to the work of an African American portrait photographer who worked in the segregated South. She is co-author of the award-winning *THINGS AS THEY ARE: Photojournalism in Context since 1955* (2005) the first international survey of magazine photography, "Richard Avedon in the 1960s," for *AVEDON: Murals and Portraits* (2012), and her articles have appeared in the *Wall Street Journal*, *American Photo*, *Aperture* and *Vanity Fair*. "

She has been an invited speaker at the National Gallery in Washington DC, at Princeton University, Rutgers University, University of North Carolina, Ryerson University and Hunter College. Since 1990, Panzer has been a member of ORACLE, the international organization of Photography Curators. Panzer has served as a consultant to Sotheby's

Auction house, Swann Auction Gallery in New York. She holds a PhD in American Studies from Boston University and lives in Manhattan and Rochester, NY.

Ahmed Hmeedat



Former Artist in Residence

Mr. Ahmed Hmeedat is a self-taught artist who experiments with a variety of media, including watercolors, acrylic, oil, ink, and charcoal. Hmeedat's art expresses the plight of the refugees and reminds people that the Nakba is an ongoing reality for Palestinians. Ahmed currently lives and works in Bethlehem, Palestine under occupation and restricted movement. He has created murals in the refugee camps in Bethlehem commemorating Palestinian leaders and activists who were killed by Israeli soldiers. These murals give comfort to victimized families, providing inspiration long after the death of the figures they memorialize. His life in refugee camps for two decades has shaped his worldview and had fed the two dominating disciplines of his life, Art, and Law. He received an LL.M. (a Master Degree in American Legal System) from Syracuse University College of Law and a Bachelor Degree in Law and Liberal Arts From Al-Quds/Bard College in Jerusalem, Palestine. He was our first artist in residence at the Museum of Palestinian People in Washington D.C from June 2018-January 2019, creating key pieces for our inaugural exhibit, *Re-Imagining the Future*. He attended art courses at The Art League School in Alexandria, Virginia. Additionally, he received art course certificates from the Museum Of Modern Art in New York City, and The Staedel Museum in Frankfurt, Germany.

Omar Hawit



Designer and Engineer

Mr. Omar Hawit founded Terraform as an architectural engineer focused on sustainable design with emphasis on building systems and resource conservation. Omar graduated from California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo, California where he was inspired to pursue a career in design of the built environment during the Solar Decathlon competition. Since then, he has gained experience in management, planning and design, and construction administration of various project types globally. He has published and presented on implementation of various technologies in the built environment through professional organizations such as the Association of Energy Engineer's World Energy Engineering Congress, AIA 2030, and ASHRAE where Omar served as President of the National Capital Chapter.

Maria Rohani



Researcher

Ms. Maria Rohani is a consultant working at the intersection of social justice and international development. Most recently, she was the Social Movements Advisor at CARE USA, where she designed and led an organization-wide strategy for engaging with activists and movements around the globe. A graduate of UC Berkeley and Columbia University, she specializes in racial justice movements and international human rights frameworks. Her graduate research critiqued the response to Black Lives Matter by the United Nations and its counterparts. In 2016, she co-founded [#BanThis](#), a photo campaign in response to the Muslim Ban. She currently resides in Brooklyn, NY.

We would like to extend our gratitude to

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