

MY SO-CALLED ENEMY
A film by by Lisa Gossels



Gal/Israeli and Rezan/Palestinian at the wall in Al Zaiem

Good Egg Productions, Inc. -- (U.S.A., 89 minutes)

World Premiere -- 2010 Silverdocs Documentary Film Festival

2010 Hamptons International Film Festival

Winner, Jury Prize for Best Conflict & Resolution Film

2010 Starz Denver Film Festival

Winner, Special Jury Prize in Filmmaking

2010 Boston Jewish Film Festival

Winner, Audience Award, Best Feature Documentary Film

2011 Newport Beach Film Festival

Winner, Jury Prize, Best Documentary Film

Winner, MacGillivray Freeman Films Award for Excellence in Documentary Filmmaking (feature)

2011 CINE Golden Eagle

Winner, CINE Golden Eagle, Documentary Feature

Press and Sales inquiries

Lisa Gossels (Producer/Director) 917 769 7444 • lisa@mysocalledenemy.com

Eden Wurmfeld (Producer) 917 446 9753 • eden@mysocalledenemy.com

www.mysocalledenemy.com

MY SO-CALLED ENEMY

Credits/Loglines/Themes

Main Credits

Director and Producer: Lisa Gossels
Producer: Eden Wurmfeld
Director of Photography and Co-Producer: Justin Schein
Edited by Lisa Gossels, David Mehlman, Toby Shimin
Music by: Nathan Larson

Main Cast:

Melodye Feldman, Founder, Building Bridges for Peace
Adi (Israeli, Jewish)
Gal (Israeli, Jewish)
Hanin (Palestinian Israeli, Muslim)
Inas (Palestinian, Christian)
Rawan (Palestinian, Muslim)
Rezan (Palestinian, Christian)

58 word logline: Spanning seven years, MY SO-CALLED ENEMY is an award-winning film about six Palestinian and Israeli teenage girls who participated in a women's leadership program called Building Bridges for Peace and how their transformative experience of knowing their "enemies" as human beings in the United States meets with the realities of their lives back home in the Middle East.

67 word logline: Spanning seven years, MY SO-CALLED ENEMY follows six Palestinian and Israeli teenage girls committed to justice and mutual understanding after participating in a women's leadership program called Building Bridges for Peace. This heart and mind-opening film documents how the young women's transformative experience of knowing their "enemies" as human beings in the United States meets with the realities of their lives back home in the Middle East.

100 word logline/alternate: In July 2002, twenty-two Palestinian and Israeli teenage girls traveled to the United States to participate in a ten-day women's leadership program. "My So-Called Enemy" is about six of the girls and how the transformative experience of knowing their "enemies" as human beings meets with the realities of their lives at home in the Middle East over the next seven years. Through these coming-of-age narratives, we see how creating relationships across borders is a first step towards resolving conflict. The girls are the experts in "My So-Called Enemy." Their voices need to be heard, particularly because they are young women.

Themes:

- o Peace/Conflict Resolution
- o Social Justice
- o Girls and Women's Empowerment/Rights
- o Middle East
- o Multi-faith and Multi-Cultural Understanding
- o Diversity
- o Film for teens
- o Family film

MY SO-CALLED ENEMY

Synopsis

In the spirit of Michael Apted's 7 UP SERIES, the award-winning MY SO-CALLED ENEMY has been praised as "moving, powerful, intelligent and brave" (The Nation) and "a mesmerizing, eye-opening film that shows the true power of friendship and empathy to conquer political boundaries." (Teen Voices)

Spanning seven years, MY SO-CALLED ENEMY follows six Palestinian and Israeli teenage girls committed to justice and mutual understanding after participating in a women's leadership program called Building Bridges for Peace. This heart and mind-opening film, from Emmy® Award-winning director Lisa Gossels (THE CHILDREN OF CHABANNES), documents how the young women's transformative experience of knowing their "enemies" as human beings in the United States meets with the realities of their lives back home in the Middle East. Through the coming-of-age narratives of Adi, Gal, Hanin, Inas, Rawan and Rezan, we see how creating relationships across personal, political and physical borders is a first step towards resolving conflict. MY SO-CALLED ENEMY presents the complexities of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict through a human lens – and the possibility and hope that come from listening to each other's stories.

A film about building bridges of understanding in our own communities, MY SO-CALLED ENEMY offers audiences profound messages about tolerance, inclusion and respect, conflict prevention and resolution – and the vital role of women in peacemaking.

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In English, Arabic and Hebrew with English subtitles. Approximately 89 minutes**

MY SO-CALLED ENEMY

Detailed Synopsis

For 10 days in July 2002, twenty-two Palestinian and Israeli teenage girls came to the United States to participate in a ten-day women's leadership program called Building Bridges for Peace. "My So-Called Enemy" is a feature-length documentary film about six of the participants and how their transformative experience in the program meets with the realities of their lives in the Middle East over the next seven years. The young women are either Jewish, Christian or Muslim. Some have lost friends and family members. All bear the psychological and emotional scars that come from living in a war zone. The main characters include: Israeli/Jewish Gal and Palestinian/Christian Rezan (the question of their friendship surviving Gal's army service is the emotional through-line of the movie); Palestinian Israeli Hanin, who makes a journey from being a secular to devout Muslim; Palestinian/Muslim Rawan, a feminist searching for her identity, caught between Palestinian and Israeli societies; Palestinian/Christian and pro-Hamas Inas, whose father died because of the second intifada and completely changes in the program, Israeli/Jewish Adi, whose narrative, particularly while in the army, speaks to the many faces of Israel.

"My So-Called Enemy" starts in the present day Middle East as we hear news headlines about the recent outbreak of violence in Gaza. Over images of the rising sun and explosions, text messages appear between Palestinian Rezan and Israeli Gal. A title card reads, "Seven years earlier." It is now July, 2002, the height of the second intifada. As Gal and Rezan prepare for their journey to the U.S., we learn what is at stake in their lives and what they hope to achieve in the Building Bridges summer program where they will learn the communication skills necessary for conflict resolution.

In the first act of "My So-Called Enemy," we get to know the 6 young women in the emotionally-charged 2002 Building Bridges program. We see them living side by side with their "enemies," as they come to know each other as human beings. We also witness what divides them through dramatic--and sometimes humorous--verite scenes. At this point in our narrative, we have started to know our main characters, and begin to learn the root causes of the social and cultural divide between the Palestinian and Israeli participants.

In Acts Two and Three--2003 and 2005, we see the young women at home in the Middle East, grappling with the successes and setbacks from their learning at Building Bridges. We meet their families, their friends and experience the daily fears and the very real frustration in their lives. By 2005, the girls are in their 20s, beginning their lives as adults. They have been studying, working and Israeli Gal and Adi are about to complete their army service. The film culminates with a complex, emotional and highly symbolic scene where Rezan takes Gal to the new 8-meter high wall near Rezan's village. A title card reads, "Four years later..." It is December 2008 and we see news footage of Hamas missiles launched into Southern Israel and the three-week Israeli incursion into Gaza. Out of the smoke, a final text message exchange appears between Gal and Rezan. The movie ends with reflections from all of the girls and a present-day post-script.

"My So-Called Enemy" is a timeless and timely film about the human consequences of all conflicts as seen through the eyes of six young women who are thoughtful, intelligent and articulate beyond their years. It is about the breaking down of negative stereotypes, multi-faith and multi-cultural understanding and the important role of women in building of peaceful communities. My hope is that viewers will be transformed as they experience the transformation of Adi, Gal, Hanin, Inas, Rawan and Rezan in the film.

MY SO-CALLED ENEMY Director's Statement

There's many things that a person might look like and you're one hundred percent positive who they are. And when you talk to them, you're shocked that they're completely the opposite. Like whoever looks at me, "No way you're an Arab." But I go like, "Oh, dude, I am an Arab!" So, don't concentrate on the first impression. If you think you don't like the person, approach them to know who they really are.

-Rawan (Palestinian, Muslim)

by Lisa Gossels, Director

When I introduce "My So-Called Enemy" at screenings, I always say that making the film was an eight-year journey of both learning and unlearning for me – and a stripping away of personal narratives that I was raised with. My hope as a documentarian is that audiences will experience some of that same transformation when they watch the movie.

I live in downtown Manhattan and shortly after 9/11, I remember engaging in some heated political conversations with close friends about the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. When I tried to express any nuance in those discussions, I came to understand how wars could be fought on words and how easy it is to reduce conflicts to black and white terms.

At a conference two months earlier, I had the privilege of meeting Melodye Feldman (the Founder of Building Bridges for Peace) and four participants from her just-completed summer program. After listening to the girls' dramatic stories about how the program had changed them, I begged Melodye to let me film her program the next year! I was excited that Building Bridges for Peace empowers teenage girls because, as Nicholas Kristof wrote, "Focusing on women and girls is the most effective way to fight global poverty and extremism."

Melodye explains, "If peace is going to happen in the Middle East, women have to be part of the process. Women have a different way of communicating. At Building Bridges we are teaching our girls how to be leaders in communities that don't give equal voice to women. So the question becomes, 'How do we empower them to change the world?'"

While the Building Bridges section of the film is essential (and the work the organization does is extraordinary), for me "My So-Called Enemy" is really about what happens to the young women after they leave the program and have to navigate the realities of their lives back home in the Middle East, having become friends with their "enemies."

I grew up in a progressive, inclusive Jewish household, raised with the activist values of social justice for all and the importance of *tikkun olam*, "repairing the world." Thanks to my upbringing and longstanding Buddhist yoga practice, I worked hard to make a balanced, intimate, character-driven film that would break people's attachments, assumptions and negative stereotypes about Palestinians and Israelis, Muslims, Jews and Christians, by putting a human face to the politically and emotionally divisive Israeli/Palestinian conflict. And, by virtue of this, to all conflicts.

"My So-Called Enemy" is about the transformative power of knowing "the other," or "the enemy," as a human being and how creating relationships across personal, political and physical borders is a first step towards resolving conflict. As Rezan, who is Palestinian and Christian, says in the movie: "Peace starts with me and the friends around me." By watching "My So-Called Enemy," viewers will experience the possibility and hope that come from listening to each other's stories.

I made "My So-Called Enemy" because I believe it is important to amplify the voices of young women like Adi, Gal, Hanin, Inas, Rawan and Rezan who "are hoping and working for something better," as Rawan says at end of the film. At its core, "My So-Called Enemy" is about building bridges and taking down walls between our "self" and the "other" and the power of women to be change agents.

"My So-Called Enemy" will be challenging for some viewers, and that is partly the point. If viewers don't agree with some of the girl's ideas, I hope they will empathize with their stories. One of the main messages in "My So-Called Enemy" is that we all are human and have the same basic needs: food, shelter, security, education, healthcare, dignity, hope and love. Time and again in screenings, I have seen the power of the women in the film to open hearts and minds and create space for dialogue about not only the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, but issues that divide us in our families, schools and communities.

When the Building Bridges participants go home, they often feel isolated in their new understanding. We see in the film how living with knowledge of "the other" is much harder than living in ignorance. I made "My So-Called Enemy" because I believe our only hope is in understanding each other. As Adi, who is Israeli and Jewish, says near the end of the movie, "There's no excuse not to have dialogue."

I can't say that we will see peace in the Middle East or in the world in our lifetimes. But, as I stand on the shoulders of the courageous and intelligent young women in "My So-Called Enemy," I owe it to them to remain hopeful.

MY SO-CALLED ENEMY

Bios of Key Personnel

Lisa Gossels, Director/Producer/Editor

Lisa Gossels is an Emmy Award-winning documentarian whose films have garnered twenty awards and honors. Her first feature documentary, "The Children of Chabannes," made with Dean Wetherell, won a 2001 Emmy Award, 10 film festival awards, had a limited theatrical release, aired on HBO Signature, local PBS stations and is now distributed by Docurama. "The Children of Chabannes" has been praised as "One of the most heartening Holocaust films ever made—splendid, informative and emotionally involving," (Los Angeles Times) and called "A seamless memoir of courage and a tribute to the human spirit." (New York Daily News) "My So-Called Enemy," Lisa's second film, has garnered a CINE Golden Eagle and five film festival awards since premiering at Silverdocs in 2010. She was honored as "Someone to Watch" at the 2011 Cleveland International Film Festival, a "Luminary" at the Boston Jewish Film Festival's 2011 "Luminaries and Legends Gala" and, in 2012, with the Annual Miller Reel Jewish Woman Filmmaker Award. "My So-Called Enemy" has been cited as "A provocative, balanced film that offers unexpected hope for resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict." (Washington City Paper) and "An insightful, moving, important film. Extraordinary." (The Huffington Post) Lisa is currently traveling around the country with "My So-Called Enemy," teaching at high schools and universities and engaging youth, secular and faith communities in dialogue. A member of the Selah Leadership Network, she became a documentarian because she believes in the power of film to effect social change. Her company Good Egg Productions, based in New York City, produces documentary, corporate and educational films. Lisa has served as a Juror for the News & Documentary Emmy Awards, The Cleveland International Film Festival, The Ivy Film Festival and The Woodstock Festival. She is a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Brown University.

Eden Wurmfeld/Producer

Eden Wurmfeld began her producing career in 1994 with her brother's experimental feature "Fanci's Persuasion." She has since produced the award-winning indie hit "Kissing Jessica Stein," acquired by Fox Searchlight to hit box office success. She went on to produce "Puccini For Beginners," which premiered in competition at the 2006 Sundance Film Festival, followed by Adam Carolla's feature film debut, "The Hammer," which was distributed by The Weinstein Company. Wurmfeld also worked as producer with director Doug Liman on "Swingers," "See Jane Run," "The Killing Floor" and "Mr. And Mrs. Smith." Eden's first documentary effort, the critically acclaimed ITVS "Sunset Story," aired nationally on PBS Independent Lens in 2005, won the jury award at the Tribeca Film Festival and the audience award at the LAFF. "No Impact Man" premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in 2009 and is currently in worldwide distribution. Her latest feature documentary, "Romeo, Romeo," will have its world premiere at the 2012 Hamptons International Film Festival. Wurmfeld co-authored "The IFP/Los Angeles Independent Filmmaker's Manual" (Focal Press), a "cookbook" on indie filmmaking, used in film studies courses across the country. In 2003, Wurmfeld received an alumni award from her Alma Mater, UCLA's Film School, and was nominated for an Indie Spirit Producers Award. She was named in the Variety's "10 Producers to Watch for 2002." Eden is currently producing and directing promotional/fundraising pieces for non-profits and businesses.

Justin Schein/Director of Photography and Co-Producer

Justin Schein has been shooting and directing character-driven social issue documentaries for more than 20 years. He has shot on over 60 films for broadcasters such as HBO, PBS, The BBC and the Discovery channel. His film, "No Impact Man" premiered at the 2009 Sundance Film Festival and continues to screen throughout the world. It documents a man and his family as they struggle to spend a year in the heart of New York City while having no net impact on the environment. Presently, Justin is shooting several documentary projects, including "Always in Season" which looks at the history and legacy of lynching in America. Justin served as co-director of photography on "One Nation Under Dog" a documentary that looks at American's unique relationship with man's best friend. It aired the summer of

2012 on HBO. Justin received his Masters in Documentary Filmmaking from Stanford University and went on to found Shadowbox Films in 1998. He lives in Brooklyn with his wife, filmmaker Eden Wurmfeld and their sons Micah and Jesse.

David Mehlman/Editor

David was a supervising editor of the 2007 Oscar-winning short subject documentary, "Freeheld," that also won a Special Jury Prize at Sundance. He edited and sound designed the 2005 Academy Award winning animated short documentary, "The Moon and the Sun." Recent television credits include editing Seasons One and Two of AMC's "Small Town Security," 11 episodes of the critically acclaimed "IFC Media Project" documentary series; "Tribes of America," a new cinema-verite series about subcultures directed by Joe Berlinger and Bruce Sinofsky ("Brothers Keeper," "Paradise Lost," "Metallica: Some Kind of Monster"); "Chuck Jones: Memories of Childhood," a portrait of the creator of Bugs Bunny for TCM; "The First 48," A&E's documentary series about homicide detectives; and MTV True Life: "I'm a Gun Owner" and "I'm a College Baller," which he directed, produced and edited. David received a master's degree in Documentary Film and Video Production from Stanford University. He co-founded Shadowbox Films with Justin Schein, in 1998, and lives in New Jersey with his wife and three sons.

Toby Shimin/Editor

Toby Shimin began her film career as a sound editor, working on projects including "Fire from the Mountain" and "Working Girls," which won a Special Jury Prize at the Sundance Film Festival. She switched to picture editing in 1988 with "The Children's Storefront," nominated for an Academy Award. Since then, Toby has cut numerous films that have premiered at Sundance, including "A Leap of Faith," "Martha and Ethel," "Miss America," "Everything's Cool" and "Out of the Past," which won the Audience Award. In 2011, Toby won the Audience Award at Sundance and was short-listed for the 2012 Academy Awards. Toby has cut diverse projects for PBS, including "AIDS Warriors," "Seabiscuit," for which she received an Emmy nomination and the Emmy-nominated "Reporting America at War." "Three of Hearts: A Post-Modern Family," premiered at the 2004 Toronto Film Festival. "Two Square Miles" aired on Independent Lens (PBS) in 2006. "A Sea Change" has won several festival awards including the 2010 NOAA Environmental Hero award. Toby has two projects currently in post-production. She received a BA in film at Hampshire College. A principal of Dovetail Films, which she co-founded with Dina Guttmann in 2001, Toby currently lives in New York's Hudson Valley.

Nathan Larson/Composer

Nathan Larson is the former lead guitarist for art-punk band Shudder to Think. His substantial credits as a composer for film music include 20th Century Fox's "Boys Don't Cry," Todd Solondz's "Storytelling," "Palindromes," songs for Todd Haynes' "Velvet Goldmine," Joel Schumacher's "Tigerland," "Prozac Nation," Lukas Moodyson's "Lilja 4-Ever," "Little Fish" with Cate Blanchett, Stephen Frears's "Dirty Pretty Things," Fox Searchlight's "Choke" and "The Messenger" with Woody Harrelson. Larson has received the Gras Savoye Award for Best Music at Cannes 2005 for his work on "The Woodsman." In 2009 the Ghent Film Festival awarded Nathan "Best Original Score" for the Swedish drama "A Rational Solution." Recent projects include the critically acclaimed "Margin Call" with Kevin Spacey and Jeremy Irons. Nathan lives in New York City with his wife Nina Persson, and maintains parallel careers as a performer, producer, recording artist, and a novelist.

Advisory Board

Macky Alston: Award-winning documentarian ("Family Name," "Questioning Faith," "The Killer Within," "Love Free or Die"); Director, Auburn Media, a division of the Center for Multifaith Education at the Auburn Theological Seminary; board member, Hartley Film Foundation.

Judith Helfand: Award-winning documentarian ("A Healthy Baby Girl," "Blue Vinyl," "Everything's Cool"), President of Working Films and Director of Strategic and Creative Development, Chicken & Egg Pictures.

Albert Maysles: Renowned documentary cinematographer and filmmaker ("Salesmen," "Gimme Shelter," "Grey Gardens," etc.), President, Maysles Films.

Joline Mahklouf Rukab: Producer of Just Vision's award-winning film, "Encounter Point," conflict resolution consultant.

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MY SO-CALLED ENEMY

Endorsements and Press excerpts

“My So-Called Enemy” is so unique and inspirational that it should be mandatory for all students and young people to watch around the world. Politicians, especially those involved in conflict resolution, should encourage the public to view it. I congratulate Lisa Gossels for her humanity and courage in making this film.

- Ayse Heinbecker Former President, Womens World Forum (2003-2004) UN, NY.

“My So-Called Enemy” is a must see film! Its messages about the importance of inclusion, tolerance and respect have global relevance. I feel truly fortunate to have had the opportunity to see this film and hope it will be shown to the youth of our communities, for they are the leaders of tomorrow.

- Staff Sergeant Shaun Brabazon, Diversity and Race Relations, Ottawa Police Service

Thank you for so much for your heartwarming and amazing movie and for giving our UN International School community such a gift. Although our school teaches our kids to be peacemakers, Queens, NY is so far-removed from what is happening on in so many parts of the world. Your movie and your presence last night brought it back to reality for us – that WE have to be part of the change (like the quote from Gandhi that the girls wrote on the wall) and we need to be part of the conversation. I know so many of our parents and friends were deeply moved and touched by your film. I have no doubt that all of them will carry your film and its message in our thoughts and hearts forever. I just pray that we all continue to remember that feeling and to do something about it.

- Yvonne Tsang, UNIS Queens Parents Association President, United Nations International School (NY)

An insightful, moving, important film... Extraordinary.

- Stewart Nusbaumer, The Huffington Post

A powerful exploration of both the pain and growth that real listening brings in a situation of conflict.

- Michele Alperin, The Princeton Packet

The teenage girls who make such compelling protagonists in “My So-Called Enemy”... offer inspiring examples of reconciliation in that embattled region.

- Ann Hornaday The Washington Post

If indeed, these women are tomorrow’s leaders in the Middle East, the future of the area is much brighter.

- Deborah Barber, Women’s Voices for Change

A provocative, balanced film that offers unexpected hope for resolution of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict.

- Erin Petty, Washington City Paper

The greatest success of the film is its ability to remain grounded and balanced. Gossels did a wonderful job focusing on a wide range of thinkers, and not limiting herself to one perspective... It was exactly the type of footage – of frustration and doubt – that served as the sobering theme, and also as the triumph of the film.

- Gabi P. Remz, Moment Magazine

Watching this evocative documentary was both a deeply moving, and deeply uncomfortable, experience. I am the same age as the women portrayed in the film... and “My So-Called Enemy” forced me, along with these young women, to understand the limits of the narrative I have come of age with, and to honestly confront the face of the other.

One of the most admirable features of the film is that no side is allowed to “win,” and the stories that are told are not neatly resolved... “My So-Called Enemy” ends ultimately with the hope that one day we will live in a world where my cousin can call his friend in the next village, and they can share their fears with each other.

- Rachel Druck, The Nation

A mesmerizing, eye-opening film that shows the true power of friendship and empathy to conquer political boundaries... “My So-Called Enemy” is the perfect film for anyone interested in conflict resolution, peacemaking, or simply witnessing how the power of friendship and empathy can conquer political boundaries

- Laini Cassis (19 years old) Teen Voices

In order to reach peace, there must be some opportunity to break down the symbolic walls standing between the Self and the Other. As Gossels and the six appealingly emotional, sensitive, intelligent and independent women she profiled on film well know, peacemaking is not much of a paradox after all.

- Mira Sucharov, Ha’aretz

“My So-Called Enemy” is one of those documentaries that you want certain heads-of-state to be compelled to watch. Already it’s garnered awards... and is stirring up complex reactions in viewers wherever it’s screened.

- Ann Hutton, Hudson Valley Times

The beauty of this film is not simply that it looks at the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in a new way; it’s that it shows how the particularly vulnerable demographic of teenage girls attempts to deal with and understand the ‘enemy’ – in this case, other teenage girls. Gossels hopes to convey a more universal message of what young women are able to achieve when equipped with the proper tools and education... It makes for a vivid viewing experience.

- Stephanie Butnick, The Tablet: A New Read on Jewish Life

“My So-Called Enemy” traces the way in which ingrained prejudices quickly erode once both sides are allowed to see each other as human.

- Shaun Brady, Philadelphia City Paper

Moving, powerful, intelligent and brave.

- Eric Alterman, The Nation

Enlightens and inspires its audience... This film shows the dangers of carrying all of the baggage of generations past when dealing with any conflict.

- Shelly Runyon, The Bay State Banner

What the documentary doesn’t do is set up an unrealistic expectation that with a 10-day summer camp program, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will magically come to a peaceful end... Rather what it does create for viewers is a deeper understanding of the possibility for change found within a more hopeful, encouraged youth.

- D. Tuchman, The Seattle Star