



SPANDA NEWS

NEWSLETTER OF THE SPANDA FOUNDATION

eNEWSLETTER

ISSN 1824-7180

EDITORIAL

1/2007

MULTICULTURAL YOUTH

CHALLENGES OF A GENERATION

CINTIA TAYLOR

This MONTH SPANDA IS TAKING ANOTHER STEP TOWARDS ITS GOAL: THE beginning of its own newsletter. Another tool with which Spanda can accomplish its goals of promoting interfaith dialogue, cultural and environmental conservation and preservation, and the appreciation between Eastern and Western communities for the realisation of their opportunities. We intend to give voice to those willing to be heard, cross visions and sensibilities, raise awareness, ask questions. Basically we want to open this space to discussion.

Jubilo and Musiké, Spanda's two main current projects both quest for the understanding of who we are and where we come from, focusing on accepting others, despite their differences. We do this by digging in our musical heritage and by learning about other points of view.

The theme of our first newsletter issue could not be more appropriate. It may be a cliché to say that the youth is the future but the youth always holds the future in their hands, and today they bear a heavier one: blurry, uncertain and full of seemingly unanswered questions. When drowning in information it is difficult to discern which is meaningful, and it is key to provide young people with the tools to swim.

Professor Dekker from the University of Leiden conducted a study that revealed that the majority of young Dutch people have negative attitudes towards Muslims. This is more so in those who have little contact with these minorities. Dr Abbas from the University of Birmingham asks Muslim youth to see Islam with their own eyes, return to individual interpretation and draw their own conclusions, regardless of what they are told

to believe in. Terrorism expert Anne Speckhard has talked to terrorists and their families. Above all she has listened what they had to say. She suggests a solution to misunderstanding between cultures: education. The key may lie here. The less people know about other cultures, the more negative they are against the 'other'. Could ignorance prevent harmonious co-existence?

Dialogue might be the only weapon today's youth will have. Our youngsters should not have to carry a multicultural world run by silence and lack of tolerance and respect. The diversity ought to be used in a positive way, by means of exchanging values, lessons and ideas. This is the multicultural youth Spanda strives for: young people who are open to others and are willing to listen, ponder their actions and find solutions in words.

We witness it happening in front of us everyday: people stopped at the door of a nightclub due to their colour, a job being refused due to their gender or because they belong to certain minority, rights being taken away due to people's religion. The events that took place in the streets of Paris more than a year ago were expected at any time in Europe. The youth is rebelling, it is lost and searches for answers. But are

we able to give them these, or help them search?

So, what challenges do we face? Which ways do we take? What advice can we give to our youth, and most importantly, what legacy can we leave them with? The time is running out. It is high time we stopped the bomb from ticking.



→ | IN THIS ISSUE

EDITORIAL *Multicultural Youth: Challenges of a Generation.*

INTERVIEWS **Anne Speckhard**
Uncovering the Roots of Terrorism.

OPINION **Thair Abbas**
Muslim Cultural Youth: Paving the Way to the Future.

FEATURE-STORIES *Islamophobia Between Young People.*

NEWSROOM *From Spanda, UN & NGOs.*

PROFILES *Jasper Shellekens; Samer Khoury.*

UNCOVERING THE ROOTS OF TERRORISM

AN INTERVIEW WITH ANNE SPECKHARD

JASPER SCHELLEKENS



Anne Speckhard, Ph.D. is an expert on terrorism. Her research projects include the study of the radicalisation process of Muslims in Belgium, France, United Kingdom and the Netherlands and the study of the psychosocial and political aspects of suicide terrorism in Chechnya, Palestine, Morocco, Iraq and Uzbekistan and radicalisation to terrorism in Europe. She has consulted to the foreign ministry and/or security forces of the United States, United Kingdom, and Singapore and also to NATO and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Jasper Schellekens interviewed her on a quiet morning in her house in Brussels over a cup of coffee and a glass of gazpacho.

TERRORISM IS RAMPANT IN THE MEDIA. Every day there is news about terrorist activities, real or suspected. Clearly the media plays an important role in establishing what we know and think about terrorism. How important is the media and in what way is it influencing peoples' perceptions and reactions to terrorism?

A.S.: These days the media is the main instrument through which terrorists amplify their effects of killing only a few persons. The more horrific and bloody their acts, the greater the witnessing audience and the deeper the political impact, which is what terrorism is all about – using violence to target civilians to influence the political process. Most people today fear terrorism, not because they have had some direct experience with it, but because of what they have seen on television, on the internet, heard on the news and read in print media. We have to find ways to make our populations more resilient so they fear terrorism less, as it kills relatively few people.

Another current issue is that the media often portrays Islam as the problem, when in reality the problems are far more complex than simply blaming any confession or religion. Muslims as a

group are highly represented in immigrant populations and are also often people of colour who face serious societal discrimination. The media often highlights the crimes that low income Muslim people commit without also highlighting the fact that they are low-income, face societal oppression, unemployment and hopelessness. If we begin to address these very real issues, we may find that the values inherent in the Muslim faith can lead people who believe they can earn enough to live, will do so, honestly and with a real sense of decency and concern for the poor. The Muslim faith actually has a lot of tenets that strongly agree with Christian, Jewish and widely held humanitarian values. It attaches great importance to honesty, decency, charity, justice and respect for all human beings.

Today we do see a lot of terrorism attached to religious ideology and this ideology is frequently using a hijacked form of Islam, but truthfully all religions have been used to justify violence and there are many groups that use terrorism that are not religious at all.

Although the results of terrorist activities are evident, the causes of terrorist behaviour are less evident, but perhaps more important. What do you think are the main causes of radicalisation and to what degree do you think they are psychological or social?

A.S.: First of all terrorism on the level of the group using it, is by definition political – it is violence against civilians used to influence a political process. On the individual level however there are two distinct paths to radicalisation and one occurs in conflict zones and the other in non-conflict zones. The causes in both areas can be analysed on four levels: the terror group; its ideology; the social support for terrorism; and the individual vulnerabilities that cause a person to seek out or respond to a terror group and its ideology. The psychosocial reasons for radicalisation in a conflict region are usually revenge, suffering, and occupation by a foreign group and often times this is a group that doesn't share the same religion. In a conflict zone you see people that lost a family member to political violence, were subjected to severe and long lasting humiliation, or saw someone wounded or deeply hurt or terribly humiliated in front of them. Angry and upset, they often want to express their outrage and even want to take revenge. And if they are also deeply traumatised – they are shook to their core – and as a result are in search of a

→ | INTERVIEW

“ The media often portrays Islam as the problem, when in reality the problems are far more complex than simply blaming any confession or religion. ”

new sense of meaning to understand this cruel world they now live in. But trauma, wanting revenge, or being highly upset is not enough. The lethal mix that makes for terrorism is when these vulnerabilities on an individual level are met with a group that is encouraging terrorism, that puts forward an ideology that meets these psychological vulnerabilities in a way that motivates individuals to take part in political violence and when society also begins to support both the group and its ideology – then you have terrorism taking off. Then traumatized individuals meet their psychological pain by radicalising in terrorist groups because they lack other good options for addressing their psychological pain. On the level of the group, terrorism is often used because the group concludes that they are blocked or non-influential in the political process, they lack other useful weapons or they believe that terrorism is the most useful mean for them at that point in time to influence politics.

In non-conflict zones on an individual level it's a different path. When we look at terrorism in non-conflict areas like Europe, we're looking at Muriel Degauque, a Caucasian European convert to Islam, who drove a car-bomb to explode herself into an American military patrol in Iraq; we're looking at Casablanca, where fourteen young Moroccan men from the slums went on suicide missions in 2003; we are looking at the London metro bombings, and Madrid and so forth. In those cases it is based on relationships and ideology. In the conflict regions leaders of terrorist organizations can play upon a deeply traumatised psyche, in a non-conflict zone you need some other individual vulnerabilities to prey upon. These vulnerabilities are usually marginalisation, a sense of worthlessness to society, lack of hope for the future, and anger over societal dynamics. A lot of recruitment in non-conflict locations happens in networks and has a lot to do with building a positive sense of identity and a sense of belonging and having a purpose despite feeling rejected by society. Instigators of terrorism in these groups generally use trauma as a motivator in addition to showing pictures and films of the conflict areas in order to induce a sense of secondary trauma.

You went to Palestine to interview family members, senders, and friends of suicide bombers and also Israel to interview imprisoned suicide bombers. When you interviewed them how did you feel? Were you afraid at any time?

A.S.: Was I afraid? No, not really. I decided to do the research and put myself in God's hands. I did my very best in presenting myself as an honest and caring person who just wanted to understand how Palestinian terrorists think and act. Most of the people I was lucky enough to interview understood that I really do care. I think they were glad to have the opportunity to talk to someone who could help them to understand themselves – I am a clinical psychologist with twenty five years experience. In Beit Foreek and in Gaza City two terrorist groups discussed the possibility of taking me hostage. I was afraid on one level, but on another I discussed it with them rationally and told them I had considered it, but first of all, I didn't think I was a very valuable hostage and that

it would just end in all of our deaths. Secondly, I asked them if I could I keep doing my research during my captivity, which made them laugh. And finally, I just treated them with respect and dignity. I even discussed with them why they might want to kidnap me and why that might be good for them, discussing the pros and cons very objectively and realistically and they seemed to respect that – that I cared enough for them to take their point of view into account. I think when you truly respect another person then that person feels it and it forms a bond between humans that makes it harder for them to act violently. Having said that, I do realise that in Gaza kidnapping has now become the norm and that I may have fallen prey to that if I had gone there some months later. All the same, I was not afraid.

What I did fear was becoming a victim in a fight between the Palestinian terrorists whom I was interviewing and the Israeli soldiers who were hunting them down. I continually banked upon my hope that the Mossad (Israeli military police) somehow knew where I was and I hoped they would not kill me accidentally or otherwise in one of their raids. But I knew it was a real possibility

and perhaps this knowledge deepened my understanding of what Palestinians live with each and every day – the fear that they might die even though innocent of any crime. I'm not saying the terrorists are innocent, but there is a lot of collateral damage on the Palestinian side and I realised I could become one of the victims of such a battle.

When you talked to the relatives of suicide bombers or other terrorists what did they think about what their relatives had done or tried to do?

A.S.: I really came to understand that they did not rejoice at the death of their loved ones. If possible, they would have prevented it in most cases and they truly grieved the loss. Their grief and anger really moved me.

It seems many countries are unsure of how to handle and counter terrorism. Each country takes steps towards the prevention of terrorism. Europe has many groups that are somewhat isolated from society where extremist ideas may gain strong footholds. Is Europe taking effective steps to prevent and reduce radicalisation?

A.S.: As I see it Europe needs a very strong civil rights movement and if European governments were smart they would take it into their own hands and not wait for the minority groups to coalesce around militant ideas that encourage terrorism, and for these groups to take it into their own hands – to force changes through violence. I would love to help train European Muslim leaders in non-violent methods. But I would want to be sure to do it in a truly productive way.

Do you think they would be willing to do this?

A.S.: Yes. They are. I talked to some of them. They are very interested, but you have to be careful about who you support and be sure of their motives. American Muslims in particular are in a really advantageous position to help, since American Arabs are much more integrated into society and suffer much less discrimination, although after 9/11 discrimination has increased. Muslim American activists can give a lot to European Muslim activists and teach them non-violent ways of achieving political goals, such as equality, economic integration, and so forth.

→ | INTERVIEW

“ *If European governments were smart they would take it into their own hands and not wait for the minority groups to coalesce around militant ideas that encourage terrorism.* ”

America and Europe have a different way of approaching the threat of terrorism and radicalisation. America actively seeks to implant its ideals on those who live there, while Europe allows immigrants more freedom to formulate their own ideals. Both of them have had certain successes as well as downfalls. Would it be a good idea to establish some connection between American and European Arabs?

A.S.: The United States Embassy in Brussels did establish this connection. Their Ambassador, Mr. Korologos, organised a programme called American Belgian Muslim Dialogue. He invited Muslim activists from the United States and activists from the Belgian Muslim community to speak to each other for three days. There was no agenda other than to speak about the main problems each community faced and identify solutions. If then they proposed programmes that they wanted to work on jointly he would try to get funding for them. With this initiative he created a room full of energised and excited people. I thought that was wonderful and I would love to see it repeated. He is very proud of it and rightly so. When we promote dialogue and self-efficacy we usually get a good result.

Is this a project that can be repeated in other countries and with even more people?

A.S.: Yes, I think it's something that can be repeated, and I hope they do. But it is only a way of encouraging dialogue, exchange of ideas and peaceful activism. The real problems in society such as discrimination, self segregation of certain communities, militant ideologies, instigating for terrorism and the injustice through out the world – within conflict zones and even here in Europe – still need to be addressed and initiatives like that will not deal with the real problems, but they do open dialogue and help activists to tackle real problems with real answers. I'd like to take it even further than that and make some educational training programmes for Muslim radical leaders. If we can reach some of these radical leaders and convince them that embracing violence does not work but embracing non-violent methods and getting highly involved in the political process works we might see more changes. If we can train effective minority group leaders to use some of the methods used by American civil rights leaders and avoid mistakes they made it might help. In America, we had Malcolm X and we had Martin Luther King. Martin Luther King is a hero and people have mixed feelings about Malcolm X. I would hate for Europe to end up with the Black Panther mentality – Muslims resisting with violence what they see as discrimination in “self defence”. You see this now with the militant *jihadists* in Europe. They are already acting. They acted in Spain, they acted in London, they've tried to target the US Embassy in Paris, and they've tried things here in Belgium as well. Why are people motivated to join these groups? They are marginalised, upset, unemployed, and feeling blocked from the political process. They see grave injustices both at home and throughout the world. They feel ignored and they feel like there are no solutions and are convinced in

some way that violence works. This is what the Al Suri's and Osama bin Laden's of the world have convinced them of – to answer these problems with violence. They need to be equally convinced that there are better ways to engage in the political process. Non-violent means are actually extremely effective. They have worked in South Africa, the United States, and India.

If a person wants to promote Islam the way they think it is, how could they resort to non-violent means when nobody will listen? Since many societies are very closed to these extreme views how will people get extremist views across without violence?

A.S.: I would love to see Palestinians and other European radical leaders introduced to the concepts of non-violent protest. Nelson Mandela, Ghandi and Martin Luther King all won huge battles using non-violent means. I have talked to many Palestinian leaders and to some radicals in Europe about this. We need to become more creative in our approaches to militant *jihadist* ideas. Many of their ideals are ideals most of us agree with – valuing

peace, human dignity, equality, social justice and so forth, but their ultimate vision of society may not be the same as ours and the means that they are willing to use to bring change are violent. Perhaps we can open dialogue on what we agree on. We can convince at least some leaders to try non-violent means if we wish to do so. I would like to see this take place both here in Europe and throughout the Middle East. It has worked to topple dictatorships and other corrupt regimes and practices elsewhere.

You said earlier that non-violent means are actually extremely effective. It surprises me that fervent followers of a cause would choose a violent method over a more effective peaceful method. Are violent solutions more popularised than peaceful means?

A.S.: Yes, of course. If you read the Al Qaeda type ideology, listen to their tapes, open their internet sites you see violence highly endorsed. Even in preaching in Europe in many circles violence is given as the answer by highly charismatic leaders. I think it would be useful to identify equally charismatic leaders and give them some really good training in non-violent methods to equip them with the tools to try to bring the justice that Al Qaeda-type groups are screaming for. All moral people want social justice we just differ in how we define it, and how to work towards it. And of course violence grabs media attention, where non-violent methods have to be very creative to get the same media attention. Terrorism is very effective in grabbing headlines.

There is another way. Namely, for European leaders to take it into their own hands and to start making positive quotas and some kind of affirmative action and really push for minority and Muslim inclusion in leadership to be involved in decision-making policy. I think old Europe is really struggling with the demographic changes that have occurred over the last fifty years – the dramatic changes in ethnic and religious groups. Europe is no longer what it once was. Nowadays Europeans must find a way to include the Muslim minority groups and their leadership to participate in making legislative decisions in essential and key roles: not just “face value” involvement, but serious engagement.

→ | INTERVIEW

“*Nowadays Europeans must find a way to include the Muslim minority groups and their leadership to participate in making legislative decisions in essential and key roles.*”

They must seriously engage the Muslim community and work in the communities. All of Europe has its hotbeds of radicalisation, which are in need of good programmes to offer them political involvement to begin to address their own problems.

European leaders also need to enforce the civil rights laws and address civil rights issues. If they do not do this they may face a violent or non-violent reaction from those who are being discriminated against. Of course, it would be better if the civil rights laws were enforced, because then it would be coming from the top down instead of bottom up. I actually think that is better and less risky that way. When the bottom layers of society get upset enough and the changes begin to be demanded from the bottom up there is going to be some level of chaos and self-organization and it is going to take on a life of its own: nobody is necessarily going to control it and guide it along a non-violent path. I would absolutely hope it would go the Nelson Mandela or Martin Luther King way of non-violence, but you can never know for sure. That is why it is much better to address the problems proactively from the government side.

If I were a European politician I would be doing everything possible to work with the leaders in these communities, making sure that the civil rights laws on the books are good laws and making sure that they are enforced. And I can tell you for sure that those laws are not being enforced, in Belgium at least. If you apply for a job in Brussels as a person of Moroccan, Algerian, or Tunisian descent you are very unlikely to get it and you may even get insulted when you go for the job interview. Together with other researchers, I have tested this by various methods – sending nearly identical resumes in with Arab and non-Arab names to find that only the non-Arab is invited to the job interview but the Arab is told the job is already filled. In nightclubs these Belgian second and third generation immigrants are also often turned away – I have personally witnessed this countless times. There is huge discrimination and if you talk to these young men, you will see that they have a building anger inside of them. Of course they feel angry and sad being barred from society.

Would it help to have an outlet to express this anger?

A.S.: Yes, but it would help more if this discrimination did not happen. On the books there may be just laws, but they are not being enforced right now and that has to change. I would say make some serious penalties. I would also say we need to educate. I know my father never changed diapers and my father-in-law did not either; they rarely cooked and did not clean the bathroom. Nevertheless, both of their sons are extremely liberated men who do everything and *expect* to do everything. From one generation to the next there was a huge shift in mentality and it was due to the women's rights movement and an increase in consciousness. And for me that is amazing and that is proof that from one generation to the next it is possible to change mindset and behaviours. If we start working now with children when they are around six to ten years old and start discussing gender roles, religious tolerance, militant *jihadi* ideologies – where it is true to the fundamentals of the Islam and where it is false and not the true call of the Prophet – I think that we could get a similar shift in mindset. Europeans can be creative and start with

prevention by teaching young children how to handle these things, learning that violence is not the way to work things out. We teach kids to avoid AIDS, to be safe on the Internet, to watch out for traffic when crossing the street, we teach them not to litter. We basically continuously educate and influence the values of children. And I think we can teach them to be more culturally sensitive and to be more open to the things that need to happen in Europe on both sides of the street.

A democratic society allows for people to establish their own schools. Immigrants have the possibility of attending their own Islamic schools. Do these segregated schools prevent the influence of democratic education?

A.S.: Yes they can, but it does not necessarily have to be so. School curricula can be monitored and tolerance encouraged. The most important thing is what is happening in the wider society and why people are wanting to self-segregate. I would say the answer is education and incentives. The international school in

Brussels has a programme that is called "Safe Schools for Everybody" which is all about tolerance. If you do not subscribe to this you cannot go to school there. Even private schools can be required to teach certain topics and their curricula can be monitored. Another way to encourage integration is by building a Sports club with all the facilities a kid wants and allow access only if they are culturally tolerant when they are there. Anybody that is intolerant will be kicked out. Right now in Belgium at least we often have the opposite – the nightclubs, which are where the young people like to go at night on the weekends, are essentially barred to immigrants of Arab descent. So they are told

in effect, "You are Belgian but we don't want you." What kind of message is that? And how do you think a young man responds when a militant group says, "We *do* want you and we can give you a real purpose, positive sense of identity and mission to your life."? That is a bad mix – these two things juxtaposed.

In the West people are so good at selling things; they can sell Coca-cola all around the world and do you think Coke really tastes that good? It is a fizzy chemical-tasting drink that is bad for you and we sell it everywhere. So why not sell cultural tolerance? Why not put some money into selling it? If we can sell something that does not taste good and is bad for you, then we should be able to sell something good.

Then you only have to pretend for a few hours?

A.S.: Pretending changes you. It makes you think and you will have to interact with everybody. These are real experiences, not just pretend. In Europe many students take a gap year out of college. Why not make a prestigious youth corps where young people in a gap year can run sports clubs and do great activities to help minority children or help their parents with job training, help the kids and their families with language training, and all kinds of other things to get young people on the right track: reaching out and integrating. It is possible to make a society where immigrants find a way to integrate and want to do so. We have to work for that, not just pretend.



→ | INTERVIEW

“Coca-Cola is a fizzy chemical-tasting drink that is bad for you and we sell it everywhere. So why not sell cultural tolerance?”

MUSLIM CULTURAL YOUTH

PAVING THE WAY TO THE FUTURE

THAIR ABBAS



Dr Thair Abbas FRSA is Reader in Sociology and Director of the University of Birmingham Centre for the Study of Ethnicity and Culture. He is author and editor of numerous books, papers and chapters in the fields of 'race', ethnicity, multiculturalism and Muslim minorities.

We LIVE IN INCREDIBLY INTERESTING times. A world that is smaller than it has ever been but could not be divided further apart. A world that is prosperous, industrious and commercially successful but where most of its populations starve or face the most difficult of circumstances. Western worlds build the guns and bullets, the eastern worlds buy them instead of food or technology, ensuring the divisions between ruler and ruled, king and pauper, remain distinct. What does all of this mean for the many different ethnic minorities who live and work in Western Europe, and more particularly, who are different by virtue of faith, colour as well as culture. I want in this pithy essay to spell out a number of issues relating to the experiences of Muslim youth, and the myriad challenges that are going to have to be faced in order to bring about a peaceful resolution to a range of conflicts.

There are appropriately twenty million Muslims in Western Europe, with the biggest of numbers in France, Germany, the Netherlands and Britain. All of these nation-states share a common history – they were all 'old Europe' and continue to dominate the political economy of New Europe as it continues to enlarge in an attempt to compete on the global economic stage, with both the emerging economies of India and China

thundering their paths to rapid growth as the last remaining superpower, the USA, struggles to cope with its loss of supremacy, something it had in abundance in the last century. But it is in Britain, where we have approximately two million Muslims

that we are now faced with important questions regarding identity politics, social exclusion, economic marginalisation and cultural relativism. In particular, since the events of 7/7, Multiculturalism has come under severe attack from the right and the left, and concerns in relation to 'Muslim terrorists' fill the public imagination, pumped up by neo-Orientalist media discourses and neo-conservative political ideologies. And yet, who, apart from political philosophers, can adequately define or imagine a genuine multicultural society, where respect for difference is matched by a national cultural framework that is fully inclusive. Much is being focused on the Muslim who is disloyal, who seeks not to integrate, women who wish to regress to wearing the face veil, and a body of youth that is out of control whether through *jihadi* sensibilities or criminological misdirection. Little attention is being paid to widening economic, social and cultural polarities.

Yet, the complex reality is more sophisticated than any of the *prima facie* outcomes. With one-in-three British Muslims under the age of fifteen, there had been a demographic time bomb ticking away well before 7/7. Young British-born Muslims are disconnected and disgruntled, they cannot engage with rural-born uneducated leaders and elders whose attention is on matters elsewhere.

Local Islamic institutions are not fit for purpose. A radical Salafi-orientated Islamic outlook is promulgated by dodgy bookshops and the ability to download dodgy *fatawas* from websites, both using the medium of the English language to communicate their fanatic ideals. But this is not always a Muslim problem, but one created by the workings of society itself and the needs of a nation-state to perpetuate the emergence of an 'enemy-other', and in the post-9/11 climate, one that is painted as living on a street near you. This fear psychosis has been used to legitimise an illegal war, and to mask the inadequacies of British foreign policy in relation to Muslim lands. At the same

OPINION

“ To engender trust and confidence in each other, Muslims have to simply let go the view that it is incumbent upon them to universalise the religion at all times. ”

time, due to a lack of resources, Muslim minority institutions continue to languish behind, with efforts on the part of the British nation-state often limited in scope or reach. It tends to be piecemeal and plays into hands of existing and emerging elites who wish for a seat at the top table. The reality is that, on the ground, matters are getting worse, home and abroad.

All of these challenges read in another way are opportunities, and this is important to concentrate on if we wish to move forward. Over five hundred years of imperial and colonial endeavours, the Europeans systematically enslaved Muslim minds and hearts. After the eventful collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the pan-Arabism of the early twentieth century demonstrated that

(i.e., teenage pregnancy, alcoholism, lawlessness, and disrespect for authority), but Muslims can step away from these issues with the confidence that most people wish to be dissociated from these behaviours and outcomes too. And furthermore, that there exist institutions, organisations, laws and practices to protect the innocent, promote the virtuous and encourage a civil polity based on the many differences and needs that make who we are as humans so very unique. The essential crux of the matter is that if Muslim minorities get it right in Western Europe, and in Britain in particular, for we have a head start, then the rest of the world's Muslims and nation-states can follow suit.



Muslims thought of one thing only – a return to the caliphate. But this vision was clouded by ideologues that saw this as an immediate reaction to the problem, not a pro-action. Muslims are simply ill-equipped (technologically, intellectually and spiritually) to engage in this state of mind. Islam is about humanity, not just Muslims. The future is forward, not backwards. The challenge today, as Islam continues to lose ground in the face of collected efforts to eliminate its presence, is to ensure that western-European born and educated Muslim minorities can act as the vanguard in this important epoch of history. The post-war period has seen independence in Muslim lands, but modernity and democracy are nowhere to be seen. Instead, despotism, militarism and factionalism are rife. Much of the Muslim theological hierarchy is morally and spiritually questionable, putting aside the fact that there should not be a clergy in Islam at all. Young Muslims in Western Europe need to return to *ijtihad* (individual interpretation) but also to appreciate the freedoms and liberties that exist for all. Young Muslims need to realise that, yes, western societies have huge problems

Britain is a multicultural society, with a vast array of cultures, languages, ethnicities, religions and identities that form it. For it to become ever more successful, one that can act as a beacon for others to follow, Muslims have to reach out and engage with others, to read Islam for themselves and to remember that many non-Muslims have greater respect for others, a sense of kindness and openness that many Muslims have simply abandoned. And finally, to engender trust and confidence in each other, Muslims have to simply let go the view that it is incumbent upon them to universalise the religion at all times. In its current manifestations Islam today simply does not have the answers to all of the problems we face. But the tools, the structures, the fabric, and the mechanisms are still there in principle. It all depends on what we do with them once we grasp their power to change. There is much to do and the time is now!



ISLAMOPHOBIA BETWEEN YOUNG PEOPLE

WHAT WE DON'T KNOW, WE FEAR

CINTIA TAYLOR

Professor HENK DEKKER FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF LEIDEN (The Netherlands) has conducted a study on how young Dutch people perceive Muslims and the Islam. The findings were surprising: 54% of the respondents had negative feelings towards Muslims and the Islam. He was astonished by it and asked: "Why should such young people be so negative?"

He chose a sample of 581 students, between 14 and 16 years old, from thirty-three classes throughout eleven schools in the country. All secondary types of education in The Netherlands were taken into account. The respondents had to answer questions regarding how they perceived these minorities, and the way they related to them.

He found the main reason explaining this negative perception was the lack of contact these youngsters had with foreign communities. On top of that, he came to understand that the respondents talked about Muslims, Turks and the Islam with their best friends and parents. This could be a main source of influence of opinion, as they believed that both their friends and fathers had negative perceptions towards these communities (34% and 33% respectively).

Mr Dekker feels that this is important to understand the problem. This negative attitude comes not from experience but from the fact that the majority of the young Dutch people have no direct contact with these minorities, and their ideas are based on what they hear at home and amongst peers.

Media can also play a role in this general attitude, as these youngsters have admitted to considering the press to give a negative opinion on Muslims in general and on Turks more specifically. This transmits feelings of threat, insecurity, fear and anger, to them, resulting in rather negative ideas, stereotypes and clichés.

Although the Internet plays a major role in the lives of today's teenagers, it is not used as a mean to uncover Islam or Muslim lifestyles. In fact, half of the respondents say they do not know much about it. He explains this by saying that: "The most important parts of perceptions are general views and emotions. Knowledge is not that strong in influencing a perception".

According to the Political Science researcher, in this kind of study it is normal to find that the negative feelings towards others

correlate with low self-esteem. However, this assumption proved to be different in this case. Nine out of ten of the respondents were very positive about themselves. Together with this, rates on Nationalism and on National Superiority, although not reaching the majority, were not that low – around 42% each. This translates into a sense of belonging, and strong positive feelings towards your group which produces negative attitudes towards others. In effect, "the higher the Nationalism, the higher the Islamophobia".

The professor believes that by promoting more direct contact between different cultures we could be able to reverse the situation. Although he is aware that in direct contact there are specific conditions that need to be met in order to produce a positive effect, he is certain that segregation is not the solution: "Mixed, multicultural schools are better", he adds. "No type of segregation is helpful. If TV news are negative and young people have no contact with these cultures, this negative attitude will remain, as there are no contradicting factors to it". He also calls the attention to schools, which ought to accept that everyone has negative stereotypes on others: "It is inevitable! We work with categorisation. As soon as we meet someone, that person is specified as a member of a category: man or woman, Dutch or non-Dutch, for example." Teachers

should therefore understand how students acquire their perceptions and work on it.

These results could mean that there has been a failure in education, but Professor Dekker is not sure about that: "Saying we should consider everyone equal is not easy. Society should teach that peace and democracy are the most important values, but I don't know if this is taught in schools".

In this study political preferences were not taken into account, preventing the academic to say with certainty that this youth is more likely to vote for extreme right parties. However, he could say that "if there is a candidate who expresses these same negative feelings, he will be very attractive for these young people".

So how can we predict the future with such negativity amongst young people? "This kind of attitude will have a long life. It doesn't change easily. If people at age fifteen think this way, then

● | FEATURE-STORIES

“ Strong positive feelings towards your group produce negative attitudes towards others. In effect, the higher the Nationalism, the higher the Islamophobia. ”

they will probably think like that for life. The question is, how important is this matter? Is it as important as the employment and the economy? If it is a basic issue, then it can be translated in the election results. It will have an effect, but I can't say to which extent. But if political leaders express the same kind of negative attitudes, this perception will strengthen”.

This is also why Mr Dekker accuses politicians: “Now we have politicians who express negative ideas. I miss politicians who have positive messages. Political parties should have the courage to do this. But politicians want to have power. This is all very idealistic”.



Photo by David Chen



The Professor explained he tried to find other studies that could measure *Islamophobia* and concluded that this was the first one. Other colleagues have been collecting complaints from police files on discrimination, but that cannot offer a guaranteed measurement, as not everyone files a complaint. He is now hoping that other countries will conduct this type of research, to collect more data, and set a network that will allow for a comparative study. However, he fears not everyone finds interest in this kind of study as it uncovers problems people are not willing to face.

□



NEWSROOM

SPANDA

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

SPANDA IS ALWAYS EAGER TO HEAR FROM PEOPLE WHO WISH TO contribute with their time, creativity and expertise. Working hours are flexible, although a minimum commitment of 5 to 10 hours a week is desirable. A good command of English is essential and Dutch and French are an asset. For more information on Spanda's work and on-going projects, please visit our website www.spanda.org. If you are interested in collaborating with us, send your CV and a cover letter to volunteers@spanda.org



JUBILO

A COMPARATIVE APPROACH
TO JEWISH, CHRISTIAN AND ISLAMIC REALITIES

LAUNCH PRESENTATION

For the launch presentation of its Jubilo project the Spanda Foundation, with the cooperation of the City of The Hague (The Netherlands), organised a conference with the participation of acclaimed international exponents of the academic and cultural world. The Jubilo project, endorsed by the Council of 100-leaders of the World Economic Forum (WEF), runs under the culture-education programmes of the foundation. The project aims to foster the inter-religious dialogue by prompting the comparative vision of Abrahamic faiths, and to increase the visibility and consistency

of all programmes and actions contributing to the promotion of intercultural and inter-faith dialogue, tolerance, ethnic integration, conflict prevention, globalisation of education for peace, democratisation and community building.

On October 13, 2006 the seat of the UN International Court of Justice (ICJ) at the Great Hall of Justice of the Peace Palace in

The Hague opened its door to an audience concerned about creating a peaceful coexistence of different faiths. The aim of the conference was to design an opportunity to engage in dialogue with the most distinguished religious leaders and academics on the topic of «Peace and Interfaith dialogue».

In the first session of the conference the speakers of the panel – Carl W. Ernst, Rachel Reedijk, Dennis de Jong, Ahmad Akgündüz, Frans Wijzen, Giuseppe Scattolin and Awraham Soetendorp – under the attentive 'moderation' of Mr Willem Post, delivered speeches bringing to the fore that effective inter-faith dialogues and empathy towards others are one of the most important pillars of peace-building actions among different faiths. After a short break, the second session started as a round table discussion, in which the speakers answered questions from the audience. The beginning, the break and the end of the event were joyfully accentuated by the *Klarinetkoor M06*, a clarinet ensemble from Breda (NL) composed of more than twenty clarinetists, whom performed Western classical music including Mozart and Benedetto Marcello, traditional music from Turkey, Israeli folkdances and Klezmer

music under the guiding baton of M^o Pieter Zwaans. The accumulated papers of the conference are being collected and will be published and available to readers in September 2007.

The conference can be regarded as the first step of the Jubilo project. By this means we wanted to raise awareness for what we believe to be the basis of the peaceful coexistence of different cultures: knowing each others' traditions and heritage. Respect and acceptance for cultural diversity can stem from awareness of shared values, differences and similarities

among our communities. Jubilo's intent is to create this educational background through the production and worldwide distribution of an English-language television documentary series, depicting similarities and differences of the Abrahamic faiths in every relevant stages of the human life, and a multimedia editorial series on Jewish, Christian and Islamic mystical texts.



Rabbi Awraham Soetendorp delivering his speech at the Jubilo launch presentation, Great Hall of Justice of the Peace Palace, The Hague, Netherlands.

Wish to know more about our [programme](#) of the Jubilo conference? Click on the highlighted words and you will be linked to a detailed report.

[MORE](#) ►►►

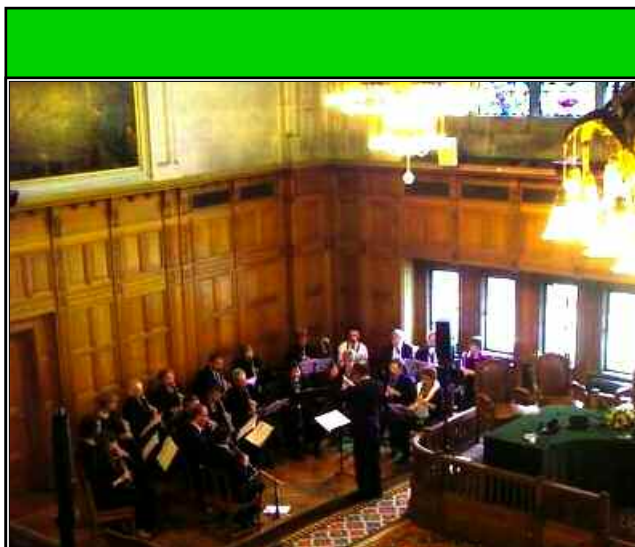
TEA FOR PEACE

Spanda is currently implementing the *Tea for Peace* project, a new initiative of the *Jubilo* project to foster a better understanding among the community of the three Abrahamic faiths.

Tea for Peace consists of a series of monthly 'tea parties'. An afternoon event on a specific topic related to the intercultural and interfaith dialogue. The event starts with screening a film dealing with intercultural issues, with everyday life and with thematics concerning the Jewish, Christian and Muslim individuals, people, and communities. After watching the film, Jubilo's guest speakers initiate a round table discussion in which the audience is welcomed to join in, over a cup of tea and some snacks that Spanda is happy to offer. Policy-makers and experts on the topic will be invited to bring their views to the audience and initiate the debate.

The first topic to be deal with is «Origin of the Ethnic Tensions: Urban Ghettos» showing the film *La Haine*, (1995) by the French director Mathieu Kassovitz. «Social Backgrounds and Motive of Suicide Bombers» will follow, featuring the motion picture *Paradise Now* (2005) by Hany Abu-Assad; then «Direct Effects of a Suicide Attack, screening *Diameter of the Bomb* (2006) by Andrew Quigley, Steven Silver; «Civil Disobedience» with the film *The Camden 28* (2006) by Anthony Giacchino.

The venue: [Het Nutshuis](#), in The Hague, date and guest speakers are to be announced



The Klarinetkoor M06 performing at the Peace Palace.



CONFERENCE BREAK

Spanda Volunteers Veronika Szlavik and Viviana Mejenes-Knorr



CONFERENCE BREAK

From left to right: Sablan L. Momo, founder and chair of the Spanda Foundation; Thomas W.A. Steiner (Triodos Bank); Paul H. Ray (Cultural Creatives); Marinus E.C. Schouten (Meermann Museum) and the philosopher Fons Elder.

on our [website](#) soon. We will be happy to welcome everybody to this event.



RESEARCH, RECOVERY,
DOCUMENTATION,
CONSERVATION AND
DISSEMINATION OF THE
ETHNOMUSICOLOGICAL
HERITAGE

The [Musiké](#) project is an ongoing assignment of the Spanda foundation under its culture-education-research programmes.

Musiké's mission is to research, recover, document and conserve the world's ethnomusico-logical heritage and to disseminate it across a wide audience by means of concerts, books, CDs, CD-ROMs, DVDs, periodicals and websites dedicated to the subject. In this way it is possible to provide a contribution towards better understanding of cultural diversity and a greater tolerance between peoples, thanks to a deeper understanding of musical traditions and in virtue of the meta-historical values of human existence of which music is among the principal bearers.

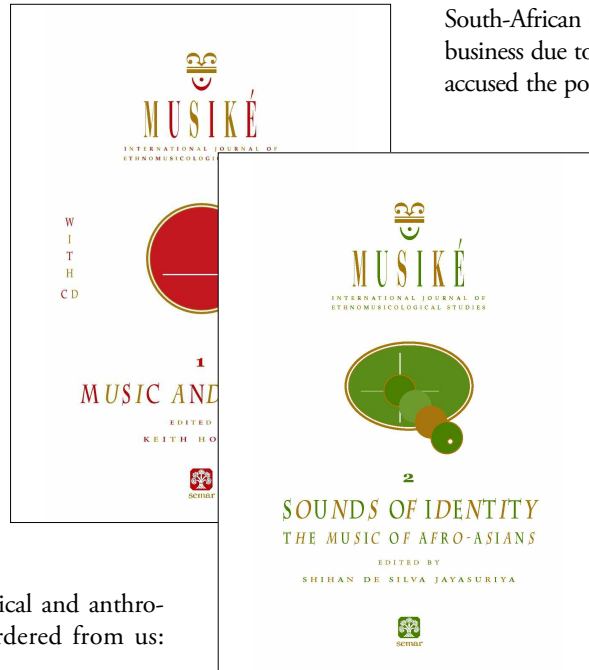
Musiké is not aimed solely at anthropologists, ethnomusico-logicals and sociologists but primarily at musicians, connoisseurs, students and music lovers in general.

This is a wide spectrum work for a professional and relatively specific audience, with an accurate and natural balance between educational values and musical enjoyment.

Following the first issue of the periodical «Musiké», *Music and Ritual* by guest editor Keith Howard of SOAS (University of London, UK), the second volume of the peer-reviewed four-monthly international

journal of ethnomusicological studies: *Sounds of Identity. The music of Afro-Asians* by guest editor Shihan de Silva Jayasuriya (Kings College, London, UK) is just out.

The third volume of the series, *Networks and Islands. Cultural Diversity in Music and Dance*, edited by Ninja Kors and Joep Bor (Rotterdam Conservatory, and Leiden University, Netherlands), is due in September 2007. The journal is available worldwide through libraries, bookshops, specialist music shops, and by subscription to individual and academic institutions, ethnomusicological and anthropological archives, or can be ordered from us: publication@spanda.org.



South-African communities, who feared a cut in their own business due to new competition. Some Somalis have even accused the police of taking advantage of the situation and keeping their goods during the attacks. The police has, however, denied such occurrences, stating that any goods they are able to collect during the lootings of which the Somalis are victims are kept in the police station for further claim. Due to the situation, many Somalis are leaving the main urban areas and installing themselves in remote locations of South Africa, where interaction with foreigners has not taken place.

The South African government is said to be very concerned about the situation and is taking the matter very seriously. The country's Refugees Act of 1996 is said to be amended in the near future in order to provide more effective management of the refugees.



A UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) report has revealed that, despite the shrinkage forests suffer yearly in an overall scenario, in some regions this situation has been reversed due to sustainable forest management and economic prosperity. FAO Deputy Director-General David Harcharik has said that "Increasing attention is being paid to the conservation of soil, water, biological diversity and other environmental values." He has also added that the poorest countries are the ones facing more challenges in achieving this effective management of their forests.

FAO points out a loss of 30% on the world's land between 1990 and 2005. It is reported that on a daily basis 20 000 hectares of forest are destroyed. That is approximately twice the size of the city of Paris. Yet, fifty-seven countries have claimed an increase in their forests against eighty-three who suffered a decrease between 2000 and 2005. The biggest losses are found in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean. In the first, which accounts for 16% of the world's total, 9% of forest has disappeared.

Out of the ten countries that shelter 80% of the global forest area, four (Indonesia, Mexico, Papua New Guinea and Brazil) have witnessed the biggest losses. Apart from direct human action, FAO also attributes responsibility for the increase of fires, pests and diseases in forests to climate change.



An increase in the number of xenophobic attacks on Somalis in South Africa has called UN attention. The Somali Association in the country has claimed over four hundred dead Somalis in the past decade as victims of these attacks.

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees has said in a news release that the trade-driven skills of these Somali refugees may have caused some resentment among the inhabitants of those



The Special Adviser to the UN Secretary General on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women advised that women empowerment and gender mainstreaming are key to tackling global challenges, such as poverty, discrimination, educational gaps, high maternal mortality, disease and other ills. The Commission on the Status of Women will focus on one major theme, the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, from 2007 to 2009.



A new World Bank study focuses on the Economic Opportunities for Indigenous Peoples in Latin America, as many Latin American indigenous peoples struggle to raise their incomes. One example of how indigenous people are cooperating to create sustainable livelihoods for themselves is the Foundation of Farmers Organizations of Salinas. [MORE](#) ➡



The recent three day Global Youth Leadership Summit at NY UN Headquarters focused on how best to attain the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and especially used the themes of sport and culture to encourage young people to get more involved in the global battle for development. [MORE](#) ➡



CONFERENCE PROMOTING EDUCATION FOR PEACE

The first World Conference on Early Childhood Education for Peace is to be held in Albacete (Spain) between the 20th and 22nd of April. Organised by the World Association of Early Childhood Educators, this three day event aims to raise awareness of the fact that only with quality pre-school education can children develop cognitive skills, norms and values that will make them embrace peace and reject violence. [MORE](#) ➡



VOLUNTEER PROFILE

JASPER SCHELLEKENS



SPANDA IS ABLE TO PERFORM A GOOD deal of its administration thanks to the help of volunteers, who contribute with their free-time, creativity, enthusiasm and dedication.

Jasper Schellekens was one of the first to knock on Spanda's door. This twenty tree-year old Dutch national born in Puerto Rico has already lived in four countries spread between South and North America and Europe. He has therefore acquired some wide global vision of how the world is and how distinctive it can be.

Jasper started working with Spanda as a volunteer in September 2005. While looking for a job, he came across a vacancy at the foundation. Jasper decided to give it a try, as it would grant him some professional experience. Besides, he also felt that this could be a way to contribute to the society.

It is his belief that Spanda brings together different view points, which is of great value in a time where miscommunication and tensions take place: "It is important to recognise the need to talk without anger about what we believe in and why we believe it," he says.

In Spanda he does a little bit of everything, but has been focusing mainly on the editing and translation of reports. He has also helped in the organisation of conferances and in some administration. Lately Jasper started collaborating with the newsletter too, which has revealed to be one of his favourite tasks within the foundation. This is because Jasper finds writing one of his passions.

He is presently completing a Master in Public International Law at the University of Leiden. This has followed his bachelor degree in International Affairs and Politics at the Vesalius College in Brussels. He wanted to travel the world and work in an international environment and thought this programme could be the start of that adventure.

After finishing the four year degree, he felt the teachings were very abstract and that he had not learnt much concrete things, as the knowledge was too opinion-based. This was the reason why he moved to the Netherlands to take his current degree: "It's more black and white," Jasper explains.

As for future professional plans, he would like to see himself working for organizations such as the International Criminal Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) or the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

Outside Spanda and his classes, Jasper is currently making a comic book, being responsible for the sketches and texts. A friend is in charge of the computer graphics. As any European, he enjoys football, although has no special preference for a particular club: "Whatever team plays better and deserves to win." But when it comes to international competition, it is the Puerto Rican flag he waves.

 | VOLUNTEERS

“ It is important to recognise the need to talk without anger about what we believe in and why we believe it. ”



DONOR PROFILE

SAMER KHOURY

CONSOLIDATE CONTRACTORS COMPANY



Mr SAMER KHOURY IS THE Executive Vice-President of Operations of the Consolidated Contractors Company Group (CCC) [www.ccc.gr], established by his father and a cousin in Lebanon in the Fifties.

Born in 1963, Mr Khoury lived his childhood and teenage years between Kuwait and Lebanon. He pursued his father footsteps by receiving a B.Sc. in Civil Engineering from the California State University. Later he also completed a MBA at the University of Southern California. He then returned to the Gulf region, working for his father's company in Kuwait. When the war broke in 1990 following the Iraqi invasion, Mr Khoury and one of his brothers fled the country in a white Chevrolet Caprice, driving 180 km through the desert until the Saudi Arabian border.

Mr Khoury is committed to several organisations, acting as Board Member, Advisor or Honorary Chair of more than twenty in sectors as different as education, peace building, inter-cultural dialogues and business. Examples of this dedication are the Palestine Investment Fund, the Center for Contemporary Arab Studies at Georgetown University, the Middle East Strategy Group (MESG) of the Aspen Institute, Welfare Association, the Peace Works Foundation, Gaza International Hospital, and the Pipeline Offshore Contractors Association (IPOCA).

In the 2004 World Economic Forum (WEF), he signed, together with eighteen other international leading companies in the engineering and construction sector, a set of business principles to tackle corruption in that industry. He is also a Governor of the WEF.

CCC itself has played an important role in the Middle East not only economically as politically. The company has been a large source of investment in the region and has contributed to the development of its citizens with initiatives such as the fund for engineers' training established in Gaza in the beginning of the nineties. Amongst others, CCC was also responsible for the construction of the Gaza Power plant, various housing development projects, and hospitality and tourism sector investments in Bethlehem.

At the same time, during its almost three decades of existence, CCC has grown closer to several political leaders. Of its main two founders, Hasib Sabbagh (cousin of Mr Khoury's father) has been appointed as a key-person for intermediary peacetalks between the US and the Palestine Liberation Organisation.

Today, Mr Khoury sits in CCC's headquarters in Athens, from where he supervises the marketing and execution of the group's activities throughout the world.



The Spanda Foundation is a transnational NGO fostering culture, education, health and research for a sustainable advancement of peace, knowledge and understanding.

COLOPHON

YEAR 1, NO. 1 APRIL/MAY 2007

EDITOR CINTIA TAYLOR

EDITORIAL BOARD

JASPER SCHELLEKENS, YURI J.P. SCHUTTE, VERONIKA SZLÁVIK, CINTIA TAYLOR, ANDREJA ZULIM

EDITORIAL AND EXECUTIVE OFFICE

LAAN VAN MEEDERVOORT 70
NL-2517 AN THE HAGUE
THE NETHERLANDS

T. +31 (0) 70 362 6522

F. +31 (0) 70 362 9848

E. NEWSLETTER@SPANDA.ORG

W. WWW.SPANDA.ORG

PUBLISHER SPANDA PUBLISHING

© 2007 SPANDA FOUNDATION

The newsletter SpandaNews and the Spanda website are the official publications of the foundation. Spanda does not accept responsibility for the view expressed in any writing, signed or unsigned, which appears in its pages: what it does accept is the responsibility for giving them a chance to appear here. SpandaNews will make every effort to ensure the information in articles are accurate. To report errors requiring correction or clarification, email us: newsletter@spanda.org.

Neither the Spanda Foundation nor any person acting on its behalf is responsible for the way in which information contained in this publication may be used.



CALL FOR PAPERS You are encouraged to contribute news and articles to the SpandaNews. For the guidelines for contributors [GO](#) Submissions to SpandaNews may be edited for a variety of reasons including the need to shorten them or improve expression.

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS?

SEND THIS NEWSLETTER TO A FRIEND

TO SUBSCRIBE Send an email to: newsletter@spanda.org

NEXT ISSUE June 2007: «WaterWise».