In loving memory of Theodore Bikel, in 2015 Partners for Progressive Israel established a Theodore Bikel Fund for Peace and Social Justice. The fund honors Theo’s social activism and immense creativity. The fund grants scholarships to young activists who volunteer in Israel to advance Civil and Human Rights, Social and Environmental Justice, or Women and LGBTQ Rights Nonprofit organization. During their internship, the interns will use their creative talents to generate written, film, and other educational materials to be used in Israel and the US to advance these causes.

The Theodore Bikel Fund honors and promotes Theodore Bikel’s many creative talents, as well as the values that he struggled for throughout his life: human rights and social justice, dignity and peace for Israel, its neighbors and the world. The Fund provides an opportunity for young people to engage with Theodore Bikel’s legacy of the arts and social activism. Like Theo, they will understand Israel – its complexities and challenges through personal engagement in social justice work, throwing themselves into interesting learning situations and meaningful work environments in Israel.

Theodore Bikel was Partners for Progressive Israel’s Board Chairman since
2005 and our inspiration for peace and human rights in the Middle East. Theo represented an alternative voice to mainstream American Jewish attitudes toward Israel. In his autobiography, he noted that “The American Jewish response to Israel is woefully monolithic. We who are so capable of intricate thought are almost boorishly insistent about viewing the complexities of Israeli society and political makeup through a one-channel, narrow prism.”

At Partners, we believe that a profound experience doing important work in Israel will shape a life-long commitment to Israel and to the values Theo held dear – democracy, peace, social justice, human rights, equal relations among neighbors inside and outside Israel, environmental justice and sustainability, and more.

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