

## Reflections at Seneca Lake

I had been holding my breath for so long. I could hardly wait to meet you, as planned, at 11 a.m. on September 24th at the western shore of Seneca Lake. I couldn't sleep for excitement the night before, two hundred yards away. From my room at the hotel, only darkness kept us apart. I had seen a sketch of you months earlier, and had even written you a haiku, my words now engraved upon your heart in an eternal bond between us. But I couldn't wait for 11 a.m. when I'd meet you together with everyone else. They would be celebrating your being, paying respects to what you stand for, admiring your beauty. But I needed moments of silent cohesion with you, just you and me. While breakfast was being served I ran down towards the lakefront. The ground was still moist with yesterday's downpour, the trees rustling slightly in the breeze, the sun getting less shy by the minute as the lake steadily took on the blue of the sky. I remember thinking what a beautiful day this was promising to be, as I hurried towards you.

Nothing I knew had prepared me for the reality of you early that morning at the lakeshore. Though smaller than I had envisioned, the contours of your tortured outstretched limbs extended towards the lake, the sky, and beyond into space. The splendor of the immeasurable pain and unrelenting hope that had so extraordinarily come together in molding you, gave life to the message at your foundation. Universal. Eternal. And the poetry you had inspired in me, at that vantage point in space and time brought us together, Mankind and Matter. Could we have such a bond?

*Earth-torn roots yearning*

*Palestine Landscape mourning*

*Displaced descendants*

In a while others started streaming in; Americans, Arabs, Jews, professors, lawyers, dignitaries and common folk from all walks of life. I was in their midst, but then when I walked a distance away to take a photograph, I realized: This scene is heavenly! There were no barriers here and no differences that mattered. The colors of this group were the colors of nature, the garb as varied as earth itself. The black-clothed Rabbi discussing his faith and how it relates - or should not have related - to you, the Nun with a microphone and camera, conducting interviews and taking record of the suffering you represent, the headscarf-ed Muslim woman reading your plaque out loud, the

lady in a Palestinian robe holding up her dress to show where you lovingly figure in the traditional embroidery. Neighbors to your plot who had offered homes, hotel rooms, and cuisine to Travelers drawn to you from the farthest states, and from continents as distant as Asia and Australia. And then there were the broken-hearted Widow, Uncle, and Companions, celebrating the memory of the peaceful Combatant who had fought for the rights of those you stand for, whose dedication and generosity were at the heart of your being realized, here, continents away from the tragedy you commemorate. You brought these diverse people together. Grouping around you, they were conversing as if they'd known each other for ages. You had them exchanging numbers and business cards for future relations. You had them discussing ways to bring about justice, even if at first symbolic, as had been accomplished here. You had each individual conveying peace in a personal style that blended in with the landscape, the weather, and your message. What harmonious diversity.

With tears in my eyes I knew that the momentary cohesion I had sought with you was inadequate and unfulfilling compared to what I had just witnessed.

The Artist in me may have celebrated the union of sculpture and poetry, but it was the Essence of my being that celebrated the union of so many Human Essences, both dead and alive, at this point in time upon the lake of Geneva, New York. You brought us together on September 24th and helped us bond with each other, uniting us in the name of justice and peace. Dear Olive Tree in Bronze, Memorial to Deir Yassin at Seneca Lake: You will continue to unite Mankind, for our bond is not that of mankind and matter, but rather, Mankind and That Which Matters.