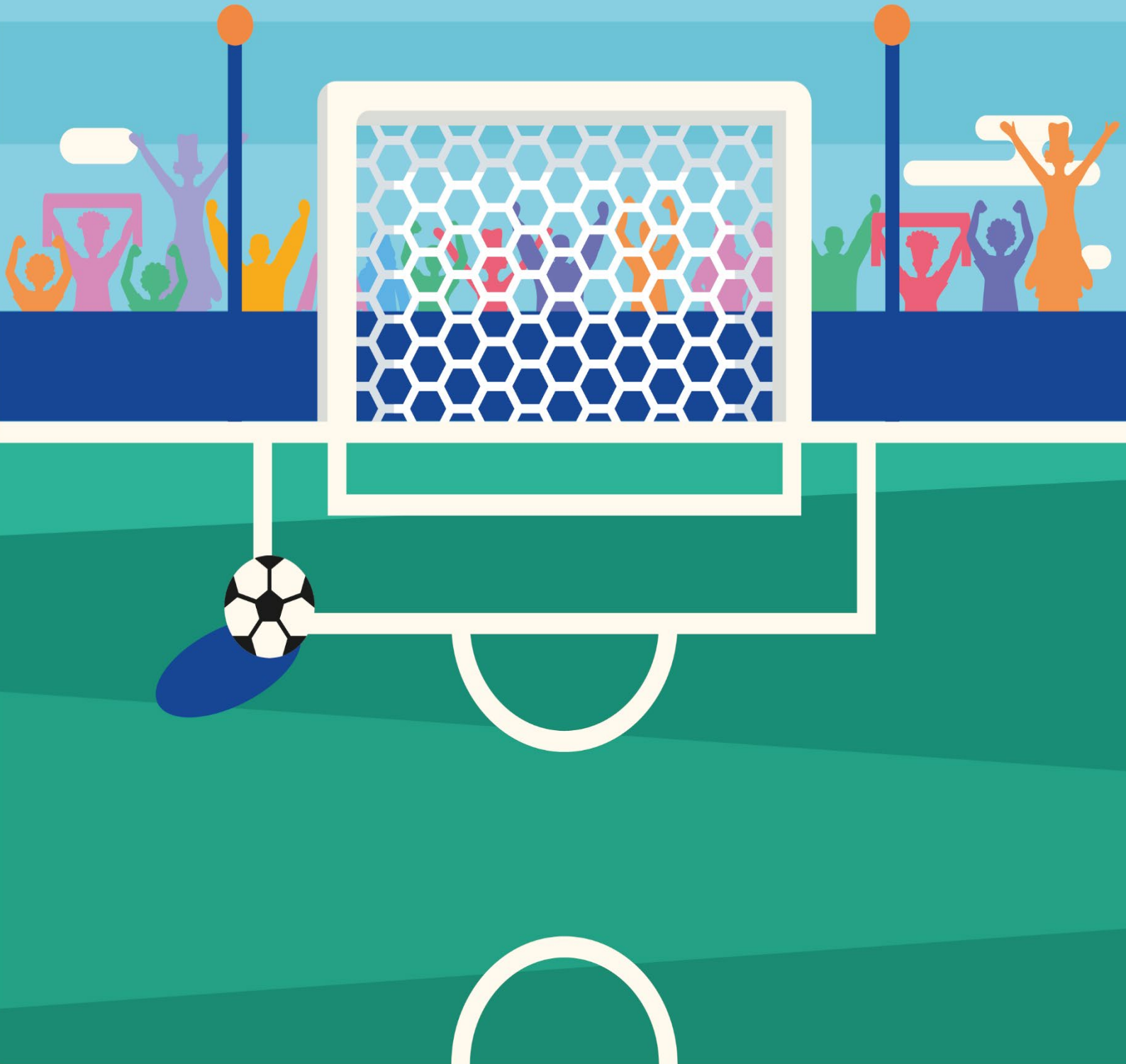


# Football against Racism

## Chana's Case





## Playing Fair, Leading Peace – Chana's case

Chana is a 25-year-old Jewish Israeli student and Youth Leader in the Peres Center's "Playing Fair, Leading Peace" programme. Chana was born and raised in Beit El – an Orthodox Jewish settlement located in the West Bank, situated east of the Palestinian city of al-Bireh. It was common in her community to hold extreme ideologies stemming from Khanism – a movement which maintains the view that the majority of Arabs living in Israel are enemies and promotes the establishment of a Jewish theocratic state.

Indeed, Chana grew up on the front lines of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Her community was separated from surrounding Palestinian villages by an electric fence and giant red signs warning 'no entry' for Israelis. Riots, stone-throwing, tyre burning, and clashes were common occurrences perpetrated by both sides. "All throughout my childhood, [I] grew up holding certain perceptions of Arabs as a result of hostility we experienced in our surroundings. Even as I got older, we were always made aware of how different 'they' are from 'us'. There was no trust and no peace between us."

Later in life, Chana moved away from Beit El to central Israel. "I was shocked that I could even talk to an Arab, let alone be their friend. But I still always held in me a sense that I needed to be careful, that they could turn on me and hurt me in an instant." When Chana became aware of the opportunity to participate in the "Playing Fair, Leading Peace" programme, something jumped out at her. "It was both my interest in sports and the opportunity to see 'the other side' and be exposed to something that I really do not know anything about that interested me," Chana says.

Though she was skeptical at first, Chana says that the "Playing Fair, Leading Peace" programme "completely changed [her] mind" about the Arab community, and especially about the other Young Leaders she worked with. "I went out with lifelong friends from the Arab community...I realized that they are just people like us – not bad people, but people with huge hearts who experience a lot of racism in this country which until recently I was a part of". Chana says that at first she did not tell anyone about her participation in the programme, for fear of their reactions. But slowly she began to tell her family and friends about her experiences. "I tried to open them to this matter. Some really accepted [my experiences] and others were shocked and scared and still think that it's not possible." But

Chana says she will continue to take the lessons of tolerance, acceptance, and understanding she has learned through her participation in the programme and continue to serve as a positive influence and force for change in her community.

"I want to thank you for the huge gift you gave me...I have won amazing friends and met people that if not for you, I would never have been exposed to," she says to supporters of





the programme. Chana's transformation is a testament to the impact of the "Playing Fair, Leading Peace" programme, and power of sport as a tool for opening minds and forming bonds of trust and understanding between Jewish and Arab leaders of tomorrow

Source: <https://www.peres-center.org/en/the-organization/projects/sports/playing-fair/>



