

## **Background and Program Outline for GPS Workshop on “Nonviolent Action: Concept and Practice,” May 4, 2013, Takoma Village Cohousing, Washington, DC**

### Background

Global Peace Services USA is a not-for-profit private organization committed to supporting education, training and research on active nonviolence as a means to prevent, resolve and transform violent conflict. GPS is currently supporting program emphases in three areas (i) the role of identity in aggravating and ameliorating conflict; (ii) the potential for the professions (i.e. engineering and nursing) in preventing and resolving conflict; and (iii) educating and raising awareness about the dimensions of nonviolent action and its potential to disarm violent approaches and ultimately bring about reconciliation.

The goal of this Workshop is to introduce the concept and potential of nonviolent action in conflict prevention, resolution and reconciliation. Our featured speakers will highlight the power of nonviolent action in enabling individual and societal change based on their own experiences in both US and foreign zones of conflict. Dr. Sovan Tun, born and raised in Cambodia, will focus on his experiences in confronting and transcending discrimination and prejudice as a person of color pursuing graduate studies in the American South in the Civil Rights era. Rev. Edgar Palacios, Associate Pastor at the Calvary Baptist Church in Washington, DC will discuss the role of civil society in El Salvador in bringing about the peace process in his country's long and devastating civil war. The conflict in El Salvador significantly affected the U.S. for several reasons: the overt and covert official U.S. involvement, the direct impact of the conflict on the many Salvadoran immigrants to the U.S. and the impact on many other Americans who were very concerned about, and who opposed, the U.S. official roles.

### Some Background Information about our Main Speakers

#### Dr. Sovan Tun

Sovan has been a Board Member of GPS USA since 2008. He is a labor economist with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Sovan is also the President of the Cambodian Buddhist Society of Washington, DC, and is a member of the Interfaith Conference of Metropolitan Washington and a member of the Governor's Commission on Asia Pacific American Affairs established by Governor Martin O'Malley. Sovan received a Ph.D. in Economics from the University of Tennessee.

#### Rev. Edgar Palacios

Rev. Palacios emigrated to the U.S. from his native El Salvador ten years ago. He is currently Associate Pastor at Calvary Baptist Church in downtown Washington, DC. As

a key leader of the civil society coalition , including churches, that mediated a peace agreement between the warring government and the rebel National Liberation Front (FLMN in Spanish), Rev. Palacios could not have been more directly involved in leading the nonviolent action movement in El Salvador that ultimately brought peace. Since his immigration to the U.S., Rev. Palacios has been active in the leadership of El Salvadoran groups in fostering reconciliation among former combatants and among all those affected and victimized by the conflicts, both in El Salvador and the U.S., as well as helping to address the issues of gang violence in U.S. cities. He also keeps abreast of current developments in El Salvador with periodic visits.

### Program Outline

From 1:00 pm to about 3:00 pm: Introductions and presentations by Dr. Sovan Tun and Rev. Edgar Palacios. Each presentation will be followed a brief interval for questions from the participants,

From around 3 to 3:15 pm: A break for light refreshments and informal conversation.

From 3:15 to around 4:00 pm: Participants will divide into small groups to discuss the presentations of Dr. Tun and Rev. Palacios, looking for common themes, resonance with experiences in their own lives and lessons learned. The groups will share their observations with the workshop.

From about 4:00 pm until around 4:30 pm: GPS Board Members Dr. Mindy Reiser and Anna Amato will give brief presentations, with an opportunity for questions, on women and peacemaking and non-violent communications in community decision-making, respectively,

From around 4:30 to 4:45 pm: Dr. Krishna Kumar will present his overview of approaches to nonviolence at the community level, with an opportunity to respond to questions. Copies of a paper on this subject prepared by Dr. Kumar's will be provided.

GPS President John Eriksson will sum up the workshop and informal socializing will be encouraged from 5:00 to 5:30 pm.