

Global Peace Services USA

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...an idea whose time has come

Fall 2004

A Special Report from the Colloquium on Peace Services: The Role of Education and Training

On March 26 through 28, about 50 people gathered at the University of Mary Washington in Fredericksburg, VA for four panels on Saturday and a working session on Sunday. Early this year, the GPS-USA Board decided it was time to dig more deeply into some of the concerns that have both bound us to other peace building groups, and explore how we see our efforts in relation to others. Two programs were planned as a result: the one is reported in this issue of our newsletter; the other, an Interfaith Symposium on Peace Service in the Abrahamic Traditions, will be held on October 30 at Marquette University in Milwaukee.

The consultation reported here gathered together a group of persons working for peace both within and outside of the university context. Some see themselves primarily involved in peace studies, others in peace education, still others in service learning. Some have their primary experience teaching and training in these areas; others are engaging in non-academic peace work. We know that the vision whose time has come relates to all of these things, but precise lines have often been hard to see. And all of them have insights into PEACE SERVICE that can enrich the work of our organization. You will see some of the fruits of this exchange in the articles in this newsletter. (continued on page 5)

The first panel "The Present Status of Peace Education Programs" with panelists:

Michael True, Assumption College

Harry Yeide, George Washington University and

Global Peace Services USA

Jeff Helwig, United States Institute of Peace

Michael True recently returned from two months in India as a Fulbright lecturer. His visits to several

universities have greatly encouraged him as he witnessed the increased interest in and commitment to peace studies throughout that country. Indeed, Michael finds peace service education here and abroad in a very different place than it was twenty years ago.

He reminded us that a peace studies program

must cast a very wide net. All disciplines have tremendous contributions to make. The downside of this interdisciplinary faculty, however, is that members change jobs or retire and their replacements may not be peace service advocates. There are relatively few full time faculty appointments in peace studies.



Another liability in the present status of peace education programs is the lack of emphasis on the theory and strategy of nonviolence. Despite the availability of information, too few are knowledgeable about the history of nonviolence and of the major non-violent movements that have brought about major social

(continued on page 5)

The second panel "Problems Faced in Introducing Peace Education Programs" with panelists:

*Kathleen Maas Weigert, Georgetown University
Mehdi Amirrazavi, University of Mary
Washington and Global Peace Services USA
Mindy Reiser, Global Peace Services USA*

Kathleen Maas Weigert addressed the relatively recent introduction of such programs in the USA, picking the 1948 founding of a program in peace studies at Manchester College as the real beginning.

Her own earlier experience at Notre Dame was offered as an example involving a non-Catholic faculty member, John Yoder, and a supportive President, Father Theodore M. Hesburgh. Her own home was in Sociology at the time, but a faculty team came up with ideas that were ultimately implemented. She is now at Georgetown where there is an institutional commitment for peace and justice, but the program has not been successful in expanding and in winning new resources.

The relevant faculty is still mostly in other established departments and often is replaced by faculty lacking the peace studies expertise if they retire or change institutions.

Mehdi Amirrazavi also drew on his personal experience at Mary Washington College. On the one hand, he described the Catch-22 situation that emerges when the dean asks for evidence of financial support from outside before establishing a program, and grant-givers require evidence of an existing program before considering any grant proposals. But he went on to a more positive, if also problematic, account of how he and his colleagues had been successful in establishing a program in Asian Studies. A faculty member who was an expert in Indian culture was credited with getting things started. He listed already existing courses that could be the foundation for such a program. They were themselves astonished to discover about 35 courses and about a dozen faculty members

who were already teaching courses and/or pursuing research that seemed relevant. The dean was impressed that one could do this with no new funding and encouraged the effort. The dean finally came up with a small budget, and they were on their way. Mehdi drew as the main moral of his story: look within first; then begin your search for additional resources.

Mindy Reiser directed most of her comments to non-university based programs. She listed several types of these programs and gave illustrations of the actions of particular organizations. She noted that some community education and service programs are also peace education programs in a "strong sense." She also spoke of a number of NGOs such as the Jesuit Volunteers, Avodah, American Jewish World Service and the Lutheran Volunteer Corps that delivered service programs in near and far parts of the world. She also spoke of special populations that offer opportunities, not only to deliver peace education but also to recruit persons who are retired and have more time to devote to volunteer activities. She explored several practical issues of organization, fund raising, the use of "alumni" of various programs, the need to have clear goals and criteria by which to evaluate the degree to which we reach them. She also spoke of the task of support at home for teams sent abroad using the structure of the Nonviolent Peace Force as an example. ■

The newsletter of Global Peace Services USA is published quarterly. GPS-USA is incorporated in the District of Columbia and is tax-exempt. Current Board members are: Mehdi Amirrazavi, Clara Doyle, John Eriksson, Jean Martensen, Aura Martinez, Cecil Monroe, Irfan Omar, Mindy Reiser, and Harry Yeide. We welcome contributions and comments. To contact us:

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The third panel "What Happens to Graduates of Peace Education Programs" with panelists:

Barbara Wien, Peace Brigades International

Linda Johnston, George Mason University

Jane Docherty, Eastern Mennonite University

The panelists stressed the evolution, maturation, and diversification of the field over the last decade, and the implications for peace education (PE) graduates seeking jobs. Multiple networking is a crucial job-seeking strategy.

Barbara Wien shared that tracking studies provide the most definitive information on what happens to peace education graduates. Unfortunately, the most recent tracking study was undertaken by the Consortium for Peace Research, Education and Development (COPRED) in 1992. But we have seen a proliferation of NGOs that are potential sources of employment for graduates of PE programs. The peace movement itself is becoming more institutionalized, systematic, and global. It's hard to keep track of graduates. St. Thomas College in Miami does the best tracking. Their graduates go on to a wide range of jobs. It is estimated that 30% of PE graduates are teaching in universities, colleges and schools.

An important evolution with implications for PE graduates is that human rights, conflict resolution and peacemaking are working together more closely now - for example, Amnesty International and Peace Brigades International.

Linda Johnston discussed how to prepare for and get the first job in the field. There has been a big change in the last ten years, from being a "conflict resolution mediator" to earning an MA or PhD in conflict resolution and taking these skills back into other professions, such as engineering and health. This has increased the value of the field, not watered it down.

The Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution (ICAR) has expanded from 5 PhD and 15 MA students 10 years ago to 15 PhD and 60 MA students now.

ICAR students are not looking for new jobs, but seeking to enhance their current jobs.

Jane Docherty noted that three of the teaching staff at the Conflict Transformation Program at Eastern Mennonite University (EMU), including Jane, are graduates of ICAR. There are both graduate and undergraduate programs in conflict transformation at EMU.

To be successful in a peace services career, the graduate must have a well-developed analytical capacity and be able to think strategically. Flexible skills and networking ability are also important.

The approach to a job search is critical. Most peace services jobs are not obtained through reading newspapers, but from a perch in existing organizations, from which new organizations are built, existing organizations are transformed or old jobs are done in a new way.

It is important to know how skills can be transferred from the U.S. to overseas. The "state of the game" is different there. Overseas, people are likely to know they have a system problem, but not many people realize this here.

Another element in a job search strategy involves joining relevant organizations (e.g. Association for Conflict Resolution, Peace and Peace Studies Assoc.) and getting to know the "players," including key peace service leaders in the Third World and military players. ■

***The fourth panel "Areas of Knowledge and Special Skills Appropriate to Peace Education"* with panelists:**

John Eriksson, Global Peace Services USA

Carolynne Ashton, George Mason University

Kath Nygard, Peace Brigades International

Panelist John Eriksson presented this educational proposal with three components: 1) Academic program, 2) Practicum/ experiential learning and 3) Placement. Academic: The classroom component would contain the following types of courses: foreign language, conflict resolution, human rights, history of nonviolence and a selection of anthropology, political science, social psychology, economics, development, international trade, ethics, fine arts.

Practicum and Placement: The duration of the practicum would be one semester during which time the student would be supervised by a faculty adviser and be given periodic feedback by the host organization. This experience would combine service and active conflict resolution. The host organization would be encouraged to hire the peace service graduate for a specific period, such as a year, upon graduation.

The next Panelist, Carolynne Ashton, Ph.D. Candidate at ICAR observed that graduates today have more options. There is holistic respect for the skills and areas of “peace expertise”...for mediation and negotiation.

She identified the marks of today's professionals who are skilled in peacebuilding as: 1) being able to acknowledge that there are problems; 2) being well grounded; 3) having good research skills as well as assessment and evaluation capabilities; 4) cultural competency.

According to Ms. Ashton, cultural competency is characterized by a profound respect for all cultures and understanding the symbols and practices of particular cultures. In new settings, peacebuilders

should be able to see and observe attentively and to reserve judgment. They must be aware of the assumptions of their own culture or cultures.

She further noted the limitations to short educational immersions, such as weekend trainings or retreats which—although often rich at the time in peace understandings—are insufficient for basic reformation. While such trainings can often become nice memories, she said, participants usually find they cannot maintain the behavior they seek to achieve. Peacemaking and peace service are rigorous disciplines that require constant attentiveness and life-long learning.

Panelist Kath Nygard considers herself “a world wanderer.” A graduate from the University of Minnesota in anthropology, (not peace studies) she has nevertheless spent most of her time since then engaged in human rights and peace work. Currently she is a volunteer for Peace Brigades International in Colombia.

There are some common elements in the training of the volunteers. Many volunteers are knowledgeable with respect to mental health and human rights issues. They are capable of thinking critically, engaging in credible analysis, assessing risks, learning in a variety of ways (role playing for example) and from previous experience. (Military incursions or rumors of them constantly test volunteers and their skills in responding to threats in a nonviolent fashion.)

Volunteers must know how to analyze themselves and contribute to the work of the group. They must know how to assess their own progress periodically. Many volunteers burn out from working too hard. Pacing oneself and keeping healthy are also skills that are invaluable. ■

(continued from page 1)

changes in our world.

Harry Yeide participated in a group who introduced peace studies to George Washington University (GWU) twelve years ago. He described three kinds of peace study programs, each with its own focus, but not exclusive to itself, noting that the original GWU program was a mixture of the first two types.

1. Programs emerging from religious or philosophical traditions have a deeper understanding of peace building values; and they try to apply them to both local and worldwide situations.
2. Programs that study various kinds of organizations, both those that pursue peace and those that sponsor violence.
3. Programs that offer study and training in the techniques and skills of conflict resolution.

Harry also spoke of his experiences with peace studies and action in other parts of the world. Emphases are quite different from patterns seen in the USA. For instance German universities put much more emphasis on research than on

teaching. He also noted that the German government spends a substantial amount of money to support peace services.

According to Jeff Helsing, peace education is hard to define. It is constantly evolving. In trying to better understand peace education, the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) has commissioned a study of the current state of graduate education in international peace studies and conflict. There are no conclusions as yet, but interesting developments have been found.

1. There has been a dramatic increase in number and diversity of graduate programs in peace and conflict studies.
2. Peace studies have expanded into many disciplines.
3. Despite the rise in distance education and in practitioners involved in peace education, only limited resources are available due to the low level of collaboration between academic and non-academic institutions.
4. There are not enough real field internships of good quality and utility. There is not enough linkage between internships and what is going on in the classrooms under peace education. ■

(continued from page 1)

Join us!

October 30, 2004

Interfaith Symposium on Peace Services in the Abrahamic Tradition

**Marquette University,
Milwaukee, Wisconsin**

Presenters:

Imam Rashied Omar
Notre Dame University

Professor Michael Duffey
Marquette University

Dr. Sherry Blumberg
Congregation Am Echod, Lynbrook, IL
*Sponsored by Global Peace Services USA
and Marquette University*

The Interfaith Symposium seemed vital in a different way. Our newspapers tell us daily that the world religions are at least involved in many of the world's most violent situations. It seems essential that representatives of the different faith communities become more skilled at entering into authentic dialogue. While many of the world religions will not be represented at the Symposium especially those born in South and East Asia, we have invited reflection on the notion of PEACE SERVICE as expressed in three world religions of special relevance to our situation today. If you missed our consultation back in March, try to participate in the Symposium coming up on October 30!

Suggestions for the Future

On Sunday morning, March 28th, Colloquium speakers and GPS Board members convened in the Leidecker Center for Asian Studies at the University of Maryland Washington to share perspectives on future opportunities for Global Peace Services USA to expand its peacebuilding activities.

Participants noted the frequent divide between academic programs in peace studies and NGO work “in the field” – but also observed that over the past few years a number of initiatives have focused on enhancing the skills and best practices of NGO staff members. Several participants underscored the importance of introducing the concepts of peace service and global awareness in a wide array of courses across college and university curricula. Developing a guide on peace service/global awareness opportunities for students at their own college or university and in their broader region could catalyze student interest in this area, and also serve to link students interested in the field to each other. An array of materials including brochures and Web pages could be created, directed to faculty as well as students. These print and electronic publications could address career opportunities in peace service, the kind of experience needed, internship and practicum placements available, and

linkages to professional and academic resources.

Participants underscored that supervision and mentorship of students involved in service-related internships at community organizations is an area requiring additional support. Participants agreed that students needed attentive and engaged supervision for optimal benefit from their internships. They noted that creative service learning opportunities, meeting community needs, have been developed by faculty and students working in fields not customarily identified with service learning, such as engineering.

Colloquium speakers observed that Global Peace Services USA could fill a particularly important existing need for enhanced communication on the importance of and rewards from peace service and the opportunities available for education and training in this area. GPS, participants noted, could also strengthen the peace movement through continuing and expanding its intergenerational work and reaching out to high school students and to students enrolled in community colleges. GPS could also facilitate the involvement of students from diverse ethnic and racial communities in peace service by encouraging institutions to provide them with scholarship assistance. ■

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