
Global Peace Services USA

... an idea whose time has come

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Introduction to this Issue

This issue features in different ways potential future directions of Global Peace Services USA. The first article is focused on an innovative program of restorative justice in schools. This is one aspect of a conversation about work that needs to be done with youth violence. Educational issues and youth are expected to be a strong emphasis of a GPS-sponsored conference, "People Coming Together for Peace," to be held next spring in Youngstown, Ohio. The following article elaborates on programmatic directions that emerged from the annual 2-day GPS Board Meeting, held in Washington, DC, in February. The final article summarizes the highlights of a symposium jointly sponsored by GPS-USA and Marquette University, "Peace Service in the Abrahamic Traditions," held in Milwaukee, WI, in October, 2004. The Milwaukee conference relates to an upcoming conference at the University of Mary Washington in Fredericksburg, VA, November 4-6, 2005, "Inter-religious Dialogue between the World Religions Regarding Peace Service."

Our feature article addresses what can be done in the schools to decrease the amount of violence experienced by students. It examines

restorative justice as a promising approach in this area.

This work has been initiated in order to deal with the gap between what peer mediation offers in schools and the disciplinary measures schools have adopted to deal with bullying and other violent behaviors. Strict disciplinary measures such as suspension, detention, and expulsion put kids out on the streets or at home free to do as they please with their time. At the same time, schools are faced with mandates both to reduce violence and at the same time to reduce these strict disciplinary measures. As the article discusses, up until now, there has been no system in place for making the student directly accountable for his or her actions. Restorative justice is one way to increase accountability while helping students stay in school.

This article is the beginning of a conversation about the work that needs to be done with youth violence. The upcoming Global Peace Services conference in Youngstown will be another opportunity to further discuss options for peacemaking with youth.

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Filling the Gap between Conflict Resolution and Discipline: A Restorative Justice Approach

By: Elizabeth Lowrey & Moriah Tuchman

Schools are constantly looking for new ideas on how to decrease instances of discipline problems, such as bullying and violence, and how to increase a sense of community - the general idea being that an enhanced sense of community and responsibility will aid in the reduction of behavioral issues and increase the focus on education. However, commonly utilized, traditional disciplinary measures that focus on punishment - detention, suspension, expulsion, etc. - clearly have not been able to put an end to discipline problems and violence in schools, nor do they help to create a cohesive school community.

School systems are faced with a need to decrease the amount of expulsions and suspensions per year but are given few alternative outlets for addressing the increasing number of offenses committed by students. Some cases can be handled through mediation, but others, such as bullying, are not appropriate for the traditional mediation model, so they are handled with traditional discipline practices instead. In the current discipline system, students frequently become repeat offenders, never taking responsibility for or understanding the effects of their crimes. Many kids do not have a real

problem with being suspended or spending time in detention, so there is no incentive for them to own up, and even if they wanted to, there is no structure in place to help them do that. However, schools do not have to be stuck in an either/or situation with only two options of dealing with discipline issues. One real alternative is the use of restorative justice as a supplement to mediation and an alternative to traditional discipline.

What is Restorative Justice?

In a restorative justice model, the mediation model is adapted to a victim/offender situation. Unlike regular mediation where the facilitators focus on a balanced agreement, the restorative justice process focuses on identifying and understanding the harm caused by the offender, repairing the harm through reconciliation/restitution, and preventing future occurrences. The process gives both victims and offenders an opportunity to express their feelings and be heard, and through this conversation the parties have a chance to listen and to understand the motivations of the other. The offender gets to take responsibility, express remorse and/or apologize, and, together with the victim, s/he works to decide what type of restitution is needed and/or to develop a plan for how they will associate in the future.

How Does it Work?

The mediators meet with each party

separately first in what is called a pre-conference. The pre-conference is used to explain the process, gather information, and assess the readiness of the participants. When the offender is ready to acknowledge (take responsibility for) the behavior and express remorse, and the victim feels confident enough to talk about the impact, then the two parties can be brought together. The conference situation is much like mediation where there is an opportunity for both the victim and the offender to explain their points of view, as well as to develop a plan for restitution.

Goals of Restorative Justice in Schools:

Focus on Harm:

Misconduct is not just rule breaking, a violation of the institution, but it is a violation against people and relationships in the school and wider school community.

Focus on Present and Future:

As nothing can be done to change the past, the process focuses on the repair of the current harm and the prevention of repeat offenses in the future.

School/Community Safety:

All individuals need the skills to make law-abiding choices in order to create an environment of harmony and mutual respect.

Offender Accountability:

Offender's acknowledgement of his or

her actions and decisions and acceptance of his or her obligations to the community and to those directly affected by those actions.

Victim Opportunities:

Victim's opportunity to have feelings acknowledged, to have effects of harm recognized and explored, and to become an active participant in the process of reparation.

Focus on Restorative Social Discipline:

Through the process, parties confront and disapprove of wrongdoings while supporting and valuing the intrinsic worth of the wrongdoer.

Competency Development:

Offenders, as well as victims, ought to be better able to perform life skills valued by the community.

Integration of Offender:

Both victims and offenders are valued members of the school community, and offenders should have the opportunity to re-enter the community without further shame and isolation so that they can become responsible members of the community, upholding its laws and values.

Implications for Schools

Restorative justice fills a gap that exists between conflict resolution and traditional discipline. It addresses those cases where there is a clear right and wrong, which would normally be handled by some sort of discipline.

Bullying, for example, is not appropriate for mediation because it would be unfair to ask the victim to compromise with the person who is harassing him. Instead the offender is suspended or placed in detention and has no real understanding of the repercussions and consequences of his actions. However, taking a restorative justice approach would allow the offender to understand the implications of his actions, to be accountable for them, and to explore ways to make things right. Furthermore, the victim would get to be involved in the process.

In addition to bullying/harassment, there are several other common behavioral issues in which restorative justice can be helpful: arson, assault, drug/alcohol use, fighting, interpersonal conflicts, tardiness, theft, truancy, and vandalism. Similar to mediation, restorative justice can be used formally and informally throughout the school and at almost any stage of a conflict. Informal techniques can range from affective statements and questions, to more moderate, small, impromptu conferences and class meetings, to the more formal, larger group meetings, to the very structured victim/offender mediation and family or community group conferences. These techniques can be used at all stages of a conflict: before there is escalation, at the peak of a conflict, or even after an incident has occurred, such as after suspension for reintegration.

Does Restorative Justice Take the Place of Traditional Discipline?

Not necessarily. Restorative justice processes can be used in conjunction with traditional discipline. Sometimes the offender is not ready to take responsibility until after the disciplinary consequences have been imposed. At times, the fact that the offender is willing to accept responsibility and make restitution could act as a mitigating circumstance in the imposition of a penalty. It is important to keep in mind that traditional punishment will not solve the problem, and often escalates the problem, creating repeat offenders.

Filling the Gap:

Certain student misconduct, such as bullying, theft, or vandalism, has proven tricky to deal with for those who embrace conflict resolution as a more meaningful and lasting approach than traditional discipline methods to handling behavioral issues. The problem is that most people look to traditional mediation as the alternative to traditional discipline, but when a student is clearly in the wrong, traditional mediation is inappropriate. And although the purposes of traditional discipline are ultimately accountability and socialization, approaches such as detention and suspension neither truly hold students accountable, nor do they teach students the social skills they are lacking in the first place. However, conflict

resolvers can “expand the pie” of options by considering a restorative justice approach, which merges the engagement of traditional mediation with the desired accountability and socialization of traditional discipline.

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Some other sources:

Operation Respect -
www.operationrespect.org

National Association of School
Psychologists - [www.naspcenter.org/
factsheets/bullying_fs.html](http://www.naspcenter.org/factsheets/bullying_fs.html)

U.S. Department of Justice
“Addressing the Problem of Juvenile
Bullying” (a fact sheet) - [www.ncjrs.org/
pdffiles1/ojjdp/fs200127.pdf](http://www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles1/ojjdp/fs200127.pdf)

Centers for Disease Control and
Prevention - “The Bully Roundup” (an
interactive board game) [www.bam.gov/
sub_yourlife_bullyroundup.html](http://www.bam.gov/sub_yourlife_bullyroundup.html)

Future Directions for GPS USA

John Eriksson, President

The Board of GPS sets strategic and programmatic directions for the organization. We currently have a Board of nine persons. They come from a wide range of backgrounds and taken together represent a wealth of experience in peace service.

New Board members this year include:

- Inshirah Farhoud, Milwaukee, Wisconsin
- Jay McDivitt, Chicago, Illinois
- Linda Johnston, Kennesaw, Georgia
- Robert Muscat, Timonium, Maryland

Continuing Board members are:

- John Eriksson, Silver Spring, Maryland
- Cecil Monroe, Youngstown, Ohio
- Irfan Omar, Milwaukee, Wisconsin
- Mindy Reiser, Washington, DC
- Harry Yeide, Silver Spring, Maryland

The GPS Board held its annual 2-day meeting/retreat in Washington, February 18-20, 2005. A rich menu of future activities was proposed. GPS will continue to view Americans and their institutions as its primary audience. For the most part, the issues we have addressed have revolved around international violence, peace, and peace service. The directions emerging out of our recent Board meeting envision a greater emphasis on U.S. domestic issues. While this does not mean abandoning the historical interest of GPS in international issues, it does imply shifting the balance in a domestic direction. A case in point is the attention given by the current Newsletter to the bullying problem among U.S. youth. Another direction, described below, is a shift from four-year colleges and universities to community colleges and high schools.

Educational Institutions*Community Colleges*

A major focus of GPS has been four-year undergraduate institutions of higher education. It has become evident that while they often do not include all the elements that we think are desirable in a two or four-year peace service curriculum, these institutions do seem well-supplied with peace and conflict courses and programs of one kind or another. However, very few community colleges provide such offerings. Yet, community colleges enroll over 10 million students, or almost 45% of undergraduates in the U.S.¹ There are various reasons for this, but there may also be a nascent demand to expand the study of peace service in community colleges. GPS Board members are actively exploring this potential.

High Schools

Problems and resolution mechanisms, including positive models, were discussed. The problem of bullying, including "Cyber-bullying," led to this issue of the GPS Newsletter. Potential resolution mechanisms being explored include: the "Educators for Social Responsibility" and "Peaceable School Program," originating in Massachusetts. School boards and peer mediation programs will be given further consideration.

1. David J. Smith, "The Community College in Peace and War," *The Peace Chronicle*, Peace and Justice Studies Association, Spring 2003, pp. 17-18.

Religious Institutions

Thanks to Board member Jay McDivitt, who is a 3rd year student at the Chicago Lutheran Theological Seminary, GPS will reinvigorate its long-standing goal of engaging with religious bodies and their related training institutions. A range of possibilities were floated, including summer courses on peace service at seminaries, both for students and clergy; a local event on "Peacebuilding in Communities," involving local religious institutions; and tying in with the "Nobel Peace Prize Forum" held annually at a Lutheran college or university.

Conferences and Events

"Justice and Mercy Will Kiss"
Marquette University, Milwaukee, WI,
Sept. 22-24, 2005

This conference is being supported by Marquette University, with support from the Lily Foundation and the Manresa Foundation. Board member Irfan Omar is the conference organizer. We would like to launch at this conference the book of proceedings of the October 30, 2004, *"Interfaith Symposium on Peace Service in the Abrahamic Traditions,"* co-sponsored by GPS USA and Marquette University.

"Inter-religious Dialogue Between the World Religions Regarding Peace Service" Conference at University of Mary Washington, Fredericksburg, VA, November 4-6, 2005.

This conference will complement the October 2004 conference at Marquette University, which examined Christianity, Islam, and Judaism.

Proposed Conference: *"People Coming Together for Peace"* Youngstown, OH, April or May 2006

This proposal from Board member Cecil Monroe of Youngstown garnered enthusiastic support from other Board members. The conference will be open to the entire community and would touch on various facets of peace service in the Youngstown environment, including current problems and their potential solution. A particular focus will be on education and youth. Various mechanisms, resources, and participants were discussed, with the objective of ensuring a successful conference. A planning committee of three Board members has been selected to assist Cecil.

Interfaith Symposium on Peace Service in the Abrahamic Traditions

Summary Report

On October 30, 2004, a one-day symposium was held at Marquette University in Milwaukee, WI on peace service in the Abrahamic traditions. Dr. Irfan A. Omar of Marquette's Department of Theology hosted the symposium as its co-chair, which was co-sponsored by the Global Peace Services USA. After the opening remarks by Irfan Omar, an interfaith

(Jewish-Christian-Muslim) prayer was read aloud by the symposium co-chair Sr. Mary Evelyn Jegen, SND, former board member of GPS-USA, followed by a welcome from the president of GPS, John Eriksson. A representative of each of the Abrahamic faiths, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, then presented sources of peace service within his/her respective tradition. Each presentation was followed by a response from another representative of the same faith tradition, and then a question session with symposium attendees.

Imam A. Rashied Omar, coordinator of the Kroc Institute's Program in Religion, Conflict, and Peace-building at Notre Dame University, presented the Muslim perspective. Rabia Terri Harris, founder and executive director of the Muslim Peace Fellowship, and editor of *Fellowship Magazine*, then gave a response to Imam Omar's presentation. Dr. Michael Duffey, professor of theology at Marquette University, presented the Christian perspective on peace service. Sr. Carol Frances Jegen BVM, Professor Emerita at the Institute of Pastoral Studies at Loyola University in Chicago, responded to Duffey's presentation. Dr. Sherry Blumberg, Director of Education at Congregation Am Echod in Lindenhurst, IL, and adjunct professor at University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and at St. Francis Seminary in Milwaukee, presented the Jewish perspective. Dr. Amy Shapiro, professor and coordinator of the Philosophy Department at

Alverno College, and Director of the Holocaust Education and Resource Center at Milwaukee's Coalition for Jewish Learning, responded to Dr. Blumberg's presentation. The two chief aims of the symposium were to highlight the *need for collaboration among diverse groups in working towards peace*, and to take concrete steps towards *developing the notion of peace service in the Abrahamic traditions*.

Omar maintained that compassion must supersede justice; that "just struggles must occur within the ethos of compassion." Omar also suggested that there is a need to generate more Islamic religious literature on nonviolence.

Harris agreed that there is a need to train new scholars, including training in self-observation. According to Harris, self-observation includes reflection on our feelings towards the God that we worship. Harris stated, "if we serve a God that makes us angry, we aren't serving the creator of human life."

Duffey's presentation focused on examples of nonviolence in the Christian tradition, starting with Jesus Christ. Duffey described how as time progressed, Jesus' refusal of violence changed into something of an impossible ideal. However, Duffey cited examples of successful peace efforts in the last century such as the Church of Le Chambon in France in 1940. The church was a haven for Jews fleeing the Nazis; 5000 Jews were rescued,

and no German was killed. Duffey credited the success of that peace effort to a history of training in nonviolent resistance, as well as a strong network of communication. Duffey suggested, "nonviolence is the alternative school that Christians in cooperation with others must establish."

Jegen acknowledged that peace efforts are difficult, and added that they must be nurtured with patience. She stated that peace is a "flickering flame; you don't bring it back with a big puff."

A symposium attendee noted that part of the difficulty of offering a school of nonviolence in the United States is that powerlessness is not an American virtue.

According to Blumberg, the reality of war is recognized by the Jewish tradition. She also described Judaism as a tradition that prays and works for peace. Blumberg proposed that a peace service based in Judaism would include study, working for justice, prayer, and doing deeds of loving kindness. She emphasized that "study" would involve dialogue between differing viewpoints.

Shapiro resonated with this idea by stating "true Shalom (peace) is impossible without appreciating the value of pluralism intrinsic to Shalom." However, bringing people with opposing viewpoints together often requires creativity. As Shapiro powerfully declared, "Waging war to accomplish peace demonstrates a fundamental

lack of imagination.”

During the discussion period, Dr. Irfan Omar questioned whether entering into peace service required a sacrifice of an individual's identity. Blumberg responded that religious identity is essential to understanding ourselves. Shapiro acknowledged that identity (i.e. language, labels) can be a source of conflict, but we must reach beyond the borders defined by political science.

Another symposium attendee asked if the Christian idea that God is on our side was inherited from the Jewish tradition? Blumberg responded, “You did get it from us, but we were wrong. God may be on everyone's side.”

An appropriate summary of the symposium is perhaps the realization that if God is on everyone's side then all should work together, but this will require patience and imagination. Pursuing peace service will also necessitate reconciliation of compassion and justice. Furthermore, it will be important to understand that conflict will continue. Peace is not the absence of conflict; the problem is violent conflict. Fortunately, there exists a global inter-faith desire to encourage active participation and education in peace service. This symposium provided evidence of that desire, as well as insightful proposals for the future pursuit of peace.

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Current board members are: John Eriksson, Inshirah Farhoud, Linda Johnston, Jay McDivitt, Cecil Monroe, Robert Muscat, Irfan Omar, Mindy Reiser, and Harry Yeide.

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