



21st Century Peace Education: Discourses, Dilemmas, Practices

Peace Education Center Spring 2008 Colloquia Series

This spring, the Peace Education Center at Teachers College hosted a colloquia series entitled: 21st Century Peace Education: Discourses, Dilemmas, Practices. Each colloquium was envisioned as a dialectical space for the intersections of disciplines and approaches to peace education practices. Each offered a provocative and rigorous look at the ways that people are bridging theory and practice in peace education to address the problems we are collectively confronting as a global community.

The twelve colloquia speakers in nine events addressed a range of topics from feminist perspectives to contemplative practices, grassroots activism to academic engagement, and environmental sustainability to public communication. Fostering fresh voices, unique practices and transnational awareness, the Peace Education Center sought to support the community in moving towards a culture of peace. The pedagogies and the presenters reflected the core values of peace education including planetary stewardship, humane relationships, and global citizenship.

The presenters themselves hailed from Australia, Argentina, Norway, Spain, Turkey, Greece, San Francisco, various Northeastern US locations, and at home here in New York City, each shedding light on a particular region, history, and practice.

This Peace Education Center series was motivated by such questions as: Where does peace learning take place? Who is doing it? How are movements towards peace gaining momentum and affecting change? And what role can we play in the process? Through activities such as these colloquia, the Peace Education Center functions as connecting hub, a point where these diverse networks of people can engage in the exchange of knowledge and discourse. Our spring colloquia provided specific opportunities for experts and students, the Teachers College community and the general public to interact with this knowledge relevant to current discourses in comprehensive and global peace education.

Enthused by the possibility of building coalitions of peace practices, the Peace Education Center Spring 2008 Colloquia Series was organized by Janet Gerson, the Co-Director of the Peace Education Center with the assistance of Marielle Amrhein, Colloquia Co-Coordinator and a Teachers College peace education graduate student.

The Story of the Earth Charter: Connecting global and local action for a more just, sustainable and peaceful world

Dr. Brendan Mackey: Professor of Environmental Science, Australian National University.

Dr. Mackey challenged us to ask tough questions about how to promote awareness about the Earth Charter, a civil society document, and put its comprehensive content into practice. Dr. Mackey eloquently shared with us the history of the Earth Charter, stressing the fact that the principles outlined in the document reflect a five year process of a global collaboration in developing a cross-cultural, shared ethical framework for addressing environmental and justice issues. The values expressed in the Earth Charter embrace global sustainable development and social justice through a shared understanding of interdependence and universal responsibility. Dr. Mackey left us with an invitation to make the Earth Charter our own and to spread its message as widely and thoroughly as possible.

Appropriately then, during the second part of this colloquium, the “audience” became participants to brainstorm ways to teach this document, use it in our own contexts, and engage with its content. Questions about the current advocacy agenda to have the UN officially recognize the Earth Charter document, affirmed the crucial role that civil society can play in educating such institutions of national and international policy. As the opening colloquium in the series, *The Story of the Earth Charter*, set the discourse in motion. Three key Peace Education concepts were at work here:

- Examples of how global community can come together through a collaborative, democratic process to create a document that outlines universal values
- Models of peace education pedagogy
- Content presenting key facets necessary for a sustainable, just and peaceful world

Seeds of New World Growing all Around Us: Radical Approaches to Grassroots Activist Learning



Chris Carlsson: Executive Director of *Shaping San Francisco*, writer, publisher, editor, and community organizer, Co-founder of *Processed World* magazine, Co-Initiator of Critical Mass bicycling movement.

Moving from a global ecological framework introduced and expressed through Dr. Mackey’s presentation on the Earth Charter to then examine specific practices at the local level, Chris Carlsson offered a look at locally emerging under-the-radar social and technological initiatives. Drawing from Marxist critiques of class that challenge economically driven global politics, Carlsson

discussed the ways that community gardens, the bicycle movement, the bio-fuels movement, and Burning Man (an annual art event and temporary community based on radical self expression and self-reliance in Nevada) are opportunities for the realization of human potential and for moving towards a more ecological and humanistic culture of peace.

Carlsson's radical approach to grassroots activism invited us to think critically about the ways we all participate in our local and global economy and to envision ways to function outside of this limiting and often oppressive structure. While his presentation focused specifically on the San Francisco context, he acknowledged and spoke to the ways that similar initiatives are arising across the globe as people respond to and confront everyday commodification. Carlsson innovatively framed his talk with a loop of projected images that vividly portrayed these grassroots initiatives. Following the presentation, he facilitated an array of questions, critiques and musings on the relevance to participants' neighborhoods, work and ecological learning processes. [Click here to access an audio recording of Carlsson's talk.](#)

Bullets into Blogs, Swords into Power Points: Old and New Media in the Quest for Peace

Dr. Dee Dee Halleck; Co-Founder of Paper Tiger Television and the Deep Dish Satellite Network; Professor Emeritus, Department of Communication, University of San Diego

Similar to the grassroots initiatives introduced by Carlsson, Dr. Dee Dee Halleck spoke to the power and role of independent media. This "people's" media serves to spread awareness of issues of global concern and to fill in blanks that mass media news selectively overlooks. Dr. Halleck herself took the initiative to purchase a satellite and to broadcast independently, forming the basis for Deep Dish TV and Paper Tiger Television. She spoke about her recent projects, which include: coverage of the "Winter Soldier: Iraq and Afghanistan" 2008 testimonies and coverage of the World Tribunal on Iraq (WTI). The former project interviewed recent war veterans revealing on-the-ground experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan that the public would not have otherwise had access to. Deep Dish's coverage of the WTI Culminating Session in Istanbul 2008, provided documentation that illustrated what the WTI was (a civil society, people's court initiative of the anti-war movement), the range of anti-war discourses and expertise involved, and the power of its culminating session location in Istanbul as the Eastern/Western global axis point.



Dr. Halleck not only spoke about independent media and its role in activism, she augmented the conversation with a sophisticated compilation of clips and images from the media sources themselves. The compilation amplified the participants' sense of how the power of image is able to evoke and involve the intellectual and emotional mind. As peace education searches for modes and manners to inspire conscious shifts in the hearts and minds of people, it is motivating to remember the role that knowledge and personal connection, in this case through media, can play to enhance our capacity for empathy and understanding. Independent media as a new mode of communication demonstrates the discourse in action.

Public Communication, Peace Culture and Discourse: Towards an educative efficacy

Eloísa Nos Aldás; Director, International Master in Peace, Conflict and Development Studies at Universitat Jaume I, Castellón, Spain

While Halleck spoke of the utilization of independent media as a way of informing the public and spreading awareness, Eloísa Nos Aldás spoke more broadly about alternative ways that public communication can be used for disseminating information, and for encouraging participation in activism and justice movements. She offered examples from Europe and specifically Spain of ad campaigns, mass text messaging, and personal email/phone networking as ways the public is confronted with global issues and asked to take action. She stressed the importance of collaboration and community in contributing to the success of public communication. Additionally, individuals are especially powerful as they pass along calls to action to their friends and acquaintances.

Remembering the ways that interpersonal human interactions are connecting points to culture and change can be simple and empowering. Additionally, public communication offers knowledge from which individuals can form local meaning and can share resources to create movement and action for change.

World Tribunal on Iraq: International Lawyers Meet Anti-War Activists

John Burroughs; Executive Director, Lawyer's Committee on Nuclear Policy and Adjunct Professor of International Law, Rutgers Law School

Ayça Çubukçu; Co-founder of the WTI, PhD. 2008 from Columbia University

John Burroughs and Ayça Çubukçu talked separately about their involvement in the WTI, then critically examined the process, effects, and lingering questions about this anti-war activist people's court. They affirmed the WTI as a non-hierarchical, democratic and brave action of civil society bringing together people with different backgrounds, perspectives and expertise to make a public record of war crimes committed by those leading the war and occupation of Iraq. The WTI was a two year process and project that encouraged empowerment and solidarity in the global anti-war movement. Both Burroughs and Çubukçu discussed the ways that the WTI consciously acted from an ideological preference to avoid creating an "institution" and to instead depend on a consensus decision-making process in an effort not to reproduce dysfunctional and power-driven institutions. Both presenters requested that people engage with the WTI by giving it authority, taking its' activities seriously and spreading the content, skills, and resources that it generated as a grassroots global activist endeavor. Burroughs and Çubukçu also lamented the limitations of the WTI, most specifically the lack of attention given to the sustainability and accessibility of post-WTI activity and resource for continuing the efforts.

Importantly, the international focus of the WTI provided a platform for world citizens to bridge networks and to address global issues with a global community for the purpose of global change. This transnational approach necessarily requires the negotiation and cooperation between people across culture, religion, class, and values systems. In many ways, the WTI serves as a model for the

ability of people to contribute to public awareness and take action when national and international organizations, governments, and legal systems fail.

Building Culture of Peace from the Roots: Engaging Latin American Public Policies & University Programs as Platforms for Change



Alicia Cabezudo (Argentina): Professor at University of Rosario, Argentina and the University of Peace in Costa Rica

David Adams (USA): independent scholar, former Director of the Unit for the International Year for the Culture of Peace (IYCP) in UNESCO

Magnus Haavelsrud (Norway): Professor of Education at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology in Trondheim, Norway

This team of remarkable, highly respected, and provocative peace educator-scholars presented a model for education that is three-tiered and includes: combining scientific research, educational policy and programming, and human rights; linking academics and activism; and connecting local participation to the transnational infrastructures of UNESCO and IPRA (the International Peace Research Association). Adams, coming from a background in neurobiology, has shown scientifically that violence is not innate in humans. Haavelsrud as a professor of education, advocated for the continuation of peace research, the importance of grounding practices in theory, and the potential for transcendental education. Finally, Cabezudo built upon their presentations of current global threats to present a model of how Latin American peace educators and communities have responded to its long tumultuous history of colonialism, military dictatorships and neo-liberalism by finding an alternative, locally based, civil society-run educational system. In a project based on the work Cabezudo has done with Educating Cities, she explained that local governments and education systems are more responsive to and representative of the local population. This is in contrast to the national government, which tends to respond to foreign or USA-based interests.

Using Argentina in particular and Latin America as a general model, on-the-ground peace education becomes highly accessible and central to educational activities. Human rights are fundamental and connected to issues of equity and access to resources. As local communities address these issues as they relate to class, race and gender, they can contextualize them within universal standards and with global cooperative support.

Adams expressed concern over the state of today's world, and invited us to re-envision how to create institutions and structures that will support us today, rather than remain dependent on aging systems that do not even address the realities of the current world. What role can peace education play in this shift? How can we develop sustainable and equity-based institutions? What can the Latin American model teach us? These are questions that not only reflect this particular colloquium, but also in many ways serve as an undercurrent of the spring series. These presenters represent some of the most thoughtful, provocative and inspired actors in the field of peace education.

Efforts in Cyprus for Peace and Peace Education

Dr. Areti Demosthenous: Lecturer, University of Athens; Director of the Institute of Historical Research for Peace; Member, Central Committee, Nicosia, Cyprus, Greece

Dr. Demosthenous provided a case study of peace education and efforts for peace as practiced from a cross-section of society in the specific conflict zone of Cyprus. She covered a range of local, non-formal education for peace and people's attitudes regarding peaceful coexistence in Cyprus. This includes research done by the Institute of Historical Research for Peace, political efforts, the Church and its efforts, and gender efforts as represented by the "Women's Initiatives for Peace and Reconciliation in Cyprus." She discussed how efforts are coalescing from these diverse places and building strength in solidarity and shared goals for lasting peace.

The details of this specific example of peace education in many ways paralleled the vision for this series and the emphasis and interest in coalition building among peace practices and discourse around the globe. Cyprus, as a small-scale example of communication and collaboration between movements towards peace, encourages further cooperation on a larger-scale. It is possible to see how the suggestions made by Eloísa Nos Aldás and Dee Dee Halleck for spreading information could inform ways to expand this model as well as integrate it into our own peace education practices.

The Missing Peace: How Contemplative Teaching is Changing American Education



Mirabai Bush: Executive Director, Center for Contemplative Mind in Society

Shifting now to the role of inner peace and contemplative teaching as an act of peace education, Mirabai Bush highlighted the Gandhian notion of the linkages between personal transformation and social action. This presentation was a part of the Satya Graha Forum which also included other events such as *Satyagraha*, an opera by Philip Glass on the life of Mahatma Gandhi. Bush discussed the importance of cultivating peace within as a necessary component of creating external peace. Through the concentrated energy of contemplative practices, clarity and understanding often arise thereby bringing insight, wisdom and compassion. She spoke of the cyclical nature of mindful attention, insight into interconnection, and compassionate wisdom.

Bush also offered concrete ways that contemplative practices can be integrated in teaching, for example, through movement, prayer, art, journaling, ritual, listening, and writing to deconstruct identity. These have been developed by Fellows in a special program for integrating contemplative practices into higher education. The program is sponsored by the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society.

With a graceful bridge from theory to practice, Bush led the group in a contemplative practice involving meditation, writing, and listening in pairs. This component of the presentation contextualized and deepened the learning and reflected peace education participatory pedagogies. It

also challenged people to examine their own minds and it created a profound spaciousness in the otherwise cluttered university and urban environment. Gandhian non-violence and Bush's heart/mind attention are resources for developing inner peace for the purpose of activating larger change.

The Complementarity of Female and Male Energies for the Skillful Means of Peacemaking

Joan Campbell Whitacre: Executive Director, Whole Women Healing and a teacher of the Shambala Buddhist tradition

Joan Campbell Whitacre's colloquium was the last of our spring series. Janet Gerson opened the session using feminist methodologies of personal narration to draw distinctions between biological sex, gendered roles/positions in society, and masculine/feminine qualities. Audience/participants created two lists identifying their associations of feminine attributes (e.g., nurturing, emotional) and masculine attributes (e.g., physical strength, rational). Building from this introduction, Whitacre offered an experiential workshop where participants explored the ways they identified with different aspects of masculinity and femininity. She provided a list of characteristics based on Buddhist distinctions between feminine and masculine energies. It was interesting to notice that while some of these attributes matched our own list, many did not. From this discourse, arose an invitation to explore the ways we are each limited by our gendered roles/positions, and possibilities to expand these socialized roles for comprehensive peacemaking.

Whitacre's colloquium illustrated a specific example of one of the ways that contemplative practices outlined by Bush can be applied to peace education. Whitacre connected self-reflection and feminism as key factors contributing to the ability of people to act with peace-based behavior. As questions about gender roles, women in peacekeeping, and women's rights gain more attention in the international and national communities, especially in light of the first serious woman U.S. presidential candidacy played out. Whitacre offered a compelling and relevant topic for discourse, particularly as this colloquia series drew to an end. Looking to missing aspects of peacemaking, an inquiry into the subtler psychological and intuitive practices can contribute to sustainability and progressive thinking at the international peace level.

Concluding Reflection

These few short pages simply contain a sampling of content, theory, practice, dilemmas, and pedagogies that inform and are informed by peace education. And yet contained in only these words are calls to action and beacons of hope. As we confront the world as it stands today; so consumed by war, violence, poverty, and disease; so influenced by globalization and economic development, it is only appropriate that we find ways to challenge these "progressive" yet destructive systems. And in fact, this series is testament to existing practices that are doing just this. The presenters acted as models of their own peace, whether it be Carlsson arriving on bicycle, Halleck using media images, Bush guiding us in a meditation, or Cabezudo elaborating an Argentinean and Latin American peace learning communities' model, it was evident in each case that, the learning started with the individual. The content of this series is a reminder that people from all over the world are engaging

in peace-based discourses, however small or large they may be. From the darkness of our current global reality arises hope. In the physical space of interpersonal relationships exists interconnectedness, and an energy that can inspire such hope.

Yet within this hopeful framework, therein lies a resounding call to action. How do we move forward with the post-WTI global anti-war movement? How can we adapt forms of public communication in our own lives and communities to build coalitions and share skills and resources for peace? What changes can we make in our own lives to reduce our carbon footprint and how can we extend that to families, friends, and governments? What peace practices are happening in your hometown or home country? What can we learn from each other and from existing peace education discourse, dilemmas and practices? Let's continue the dialogue, the discourse and the movements towards a culture of peace. The Peace Education Center invites your personal contributions, resources, and information. The more we engage with each other, the more we can support and streamline our practices, and the more we can encourage others to join us in conversation and in action.



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