



Interwoven Stories:

The Fabric of Community

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Editors-in-Chief: Jessica Moe and Lisa Jokivirta

Credits

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Note from Editors

Jessica Moe
and
Lisa Jokivirta

The University for Peace is indeed a unique place. Consisting of 150 students from 50 countries and 6 continents, it is characterized simultaneously by a sense of intimacy and of diversity. Students converge from worlds and experiences apart; become united by a sense of understanding of our common humanity; and disperse with a sharpened vision of the possibility of building a more peaceful world.

The UPEACE community is also about all of those who contribute their energy to bringing it together - fiancés and significant others; faculty and professors; administrative staff; and every individual who dedicates him or herself to making sure the gate opens for the bus every morning, keeping the flowers watered and the grass trimmed, or filling our stomachs with hearty lunches and delicious brownies. This is our community.

This project was born out of a fascination with the richness of our stories. It was also born out of a sincere vision that, through sharing these stories, we might gain a deeper level of understanding, empathy, and inspiration through which we might know one another better and be brought closer together.

Over the course of three months, we collected stories, essays, poetry, art, photographs, personal narratives, anecdotes, and other forms of expression, from UPEACE community members. The guiding theme for submissions was the First Pillar of the Earth Charter: "Respect and Care for the Community of Life." This theme was intentionally left

broad to invite a diversity of thoughts, reflections, and interpretations, from our various social, cultural, and spiritual perspectives.

After much energy expended persuading, collecting, and arranging, it is with the utmost pride and honour that we look upon the rich compilation that has come together, piece by piece; a whole finds an organic coherence.

This publication is a humble attempt to show the beauty of the fabric of our interwoven stories.

Preface

The Power of Stories

Jessica Moe

This process has been so deeply rewarding. Looking at the compilation in front of us, we catch an unmistakable glimpse of the beauty of our diverse community. All of us together have created something that is unique in the world, its essence arising from the timbre of each voice, the care of each brushstroke, the song of each idea, the detail of each photograph, and the poetry of each word. We have created a reflection of ourselves, through the stories we have shared. We have created something that glimpses unmistakably into the soul of our community.

How can there be such power in stories, to tap so deep? In telling our stories, we make ourselves vulnerable; we share the things that inspire us, that revolt us, that bring joy or utter pain. We move beyond the polite distance of the everyday. We share a thought that might be ridiculed; an idea that brightens us up at the risk that of it being found lackluster by others; a moving experience knowing that it may not stir a single fiber in the person to whom we carefully pass it. We share an insight that, to us, opened up the whole universe, while knowing that the other may find it dull or passé.

In telling stories, in sharing thoughts and ideas, we open ourselves, whether fearlessly or with cautious trepidation. In so doing we allow ourselves to be known from the light of a new metaphor or from a vantage point previously undisclosed. When we share stories, we are party to a tacit and meaningful understanding, one forged by the power of having together volunteered our vulnerabilities. Thus, we are brought closer together, in a special bond that could not otherwise have been created.

The physicist Heisenberg developed a principle of uncertainty. Broadly expressed, no two entities can ever meet without influencing the path of the other. Even an observer, by the act of observing, changes the course of that which he observes. So it is with people. Coming, going, weaving together, becoming the best of friends, brushing by one another in the street, happening to sit beside one another on the bus, we become inextricably woven into each other's experience. Their course, even if to the slightest degree, becomes deflected by its contact with our own; neither experience remains unchanged. Our stories are hence inevitably woven together.

In a community like ours, the meeting of diverse entities is a deliberate experience. Ours is truly a unique space in which individuals from all over the world, from a spectrum of backgrounds and perspectives, have been purposefully brought together. Here, we discover how we weave our experiences together, how we interact, clash, unite, are challenged, and work towards some sort of consensus of a resolution. We find something about our common selves.

Foreword: Inspiration

Mirian Vilela

When I first heard about the idea of putting together this collection of thoughts, expressions, and feelings regarding “Respect and Care for the Community of Life,” I thought this was an excellent and unique opportunity to bring together different voices from the University for Peace community and honor the rich diversity we have here. I was particularly excited because the vision was to call for contributions across different ‘groups’ and ‘boundaries’ within the UPEACE community.

This remarkable effort shows that when a good idea is mixed with the commitment of talented individuals who have a clear vision of what they want to do, the result can only be something good. For this, I want to pay special tribute to Lisa Jokivirta and Jessica Moe for their sparkling idea, fantastic human qualities, enthusiasm and profound dedication to making this book project a reality. And, especially, for themselves being examples of caring human beings. It was such an inspiring experience for me to hear their joy and celebration each time they received a submission from the authors in this book. It was also remarkable to see their pleasure, dedication, and passion in undertaking this project.

“Interwoven Stories: the Fabric of Community” became a reality because every contributor dared to share his or her thoughts, emotions, experiences, and ways of interpreting the notion of “Respect and Care for the Community of Life.” Whether through poems, stories, or essays, each voice helped, in its own unique way, to shape this into a fantastic collection and an example of both our rich diversity and the common ground we share across cultures. I believe this will inspire many future generations of students, faculty, and staff members to come.

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I. Connectedness



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Home in the Wind



**Adria Scharman
Fuentes**
Student, Mexico

Adria Scharman Fuentes is what her mom calls a "pata de perro," who just cannot stay in one place for longer than a year, running like the wind in seasonal search of new homes. A Cultural and Social Anthropologist, she finds joy in studying the world and its people by what is better known as participant observation. Inspired by people's stories, and the art of it all; the music, the dancing, the theater, the drawings, the public expression of communities which bring her to firmly believe in the power it all has in our search for peace. She quotes Augusto Boal: it is "Peace not passivity" that she wants, and she will continue to be an activist as long as there is wind to breathe.

*I can stand on the balcony of this,
My new home and open my eyes.
I can stand and feel the raging wind
Race through that valley of blinking lights
It makes chills run down my spine and my mind
Wonder where it comes from.
Where does this wind come from?
And why is it in such a hurry to get away?*

*I can stand on the balcony of this,
My new home and wonder
Wonder how far this wind has traveled,
How far it comes from and
How far away it will go?*

*Maybe it's the same wind that some time ago
Crossed my way in some other far away place
I once called home?*

*Maybe one day I will feel its rage and
Chills down my spine, when I am far away
From this, my new home and somewhere new
I by then will call home?*

*And by then this will just be another place
Far away from home.*

Searching for Community



Erika Hartwick
Student, United States

Erika Hartwick hails from Los Estados Unidos, where she has experienced communities of many kinds. Having graduated from James Madison University in Virginia, she moved to New York City to take on her first "real job" as a Labor Relations Analyst. She later spent five years working with an NGO in Washington, DC called National Association for Community Mediation.

www.erikahartwick.com

Perhaps it is my human tribal instinct that has driven me to look for a space, shared by other humans, in which I feel comfortable. Whatever the reason, I've been searching as long as I can remember. Although, I didn't realize that I was searching until I actually found it. I found a community where I can be me, where I feel safe enough to let someone know that I don't know. I can close my eyes and fall backward and know that there are arms to catch me.

When I was much younger than I am now, my parents took me to church every Sunday. Each week, I pondered the hairstyles of the older women in front of me and worked to harness my nervous energy as we all stood up, kneeled, stood up, sat, stood up, stood up, stood up and voices droned words in unison all around me, with no inflection, with no depth, with no evidence of real meaning. I couldn't really see what the man up front was doing because of the large hair in front of me, but when it came time for the homily and he stood high on a podium and told a story, I looked around me and only saw vacant expressions. "Why are these people here?" I thought to myself. "They all look sad. They all look miserable. They all look like they are in trouble and are being punished." And then Christmas arrived. The church transformed into a home with warm rich light, accented by the dense red of poinsettias and families and friends packed into pews who raised their voices in song and celebration! I felt the hair on my arms raise and tingle and felt my face grow hot with happiness and the communal sensation of hope and togetherness. This is it! This is the feeling of community! I want more of this feeling! But one week later, back in church again, it was gone. Stand. Sit. Kneel. Stand. Stand. Stand.

Travel forward through time about 15 years. Car after car passed by me as I sat at a stoplight. Each and every car had

a United States flag flying from the window. The flags were an emblem of solidarity for our country, our community that was attacked just days before on September 11. Strangers talked peacefully to each other while standing in lines at the store. This was not normal behavior. Individuals let down their guards and made eye contact with one another. They shared stories and showed genuine concern for people they had never met. My country was united as a community in mourning. The behavior was right, the situation was all wrong.

Luckily for me, September 2001 was also the time that I started new work at the National Association for Community Mediation.

My job was to help connect conflict resolution practitioners from all over the United States in order that they might share best practices, curricula, and participate in training to further develop or start new community mediation centers in their neighborhoods. The people I talked to on the phone and met in person shared the very same passion that I have, to help empower individuals to solve problems and bring peace to their lives. Every encounter with a member felt a little bit like Christmas!

Six years later, I entered the University for Peace with the hope that I could expand my work and learn more about communities and cultures from all around the world. As I sit in class and look around at my new friends and colleagues, listening and learning about the worlds they come from, I feel that I have found myself a brand new kind of community, one that expands around the globe and one that will stay with me for the rest of my life. One where I can be me, close my eyes and fall backward and know that there will always be arms open to catch me.

My Kind of Communities



Menandro S. Abanes
Student, Philippines

Menandro Abanes lives in Milaor, Camarines Sur in Bicol, Philippines. He is currently pursuing the Dual-Campus Program in International Peace Studies at UPEACE. He is an advocate of alternatives and student of life.

There are questions that remind me of community. These are the types of questions that invoke a certain feeling of nostalgia, of the significance of nourishment, and a sense of belonging. Let me begin by welcoming you to my kind of communities.

My Locale as a Community

Every time I am asked where I come from, I am reminded of my small community in Milaor, Camarines Sur in Bicol, Philippines. In this community where I was born and raised, I find myself part of its harmony, energy and character. My attachment to the community is not merely based on locale and territory. A fundamental association has been built in the years that I have lived there, in the names of people I know there, in the streets and corners I cross and turn, and in the stories I share with the locals. It is personally and intimately connected with me. Thus, wherever I go I bring a part of my locale.

UPEACE and Ateneo de Manila University (ADMU) as a Community

Another question which reminds me of a community is: where do you study? I am pursuing a graduate degree at UPEACE in Costa Rica and Ateneo de Manila University (ADMU) in Manila. I spend most of my conscious time at UPEACE and ADMU. This is where I encounter and socialize with my peers, the staff and faculty. Graduate university life is not simply an extension of college life. Neither is it only about mastering a field of study, investing more time in reading and writing essays at the graduate level, or meeting deadline after deadline of required submissions. It is, to my mind, a cultivation of a learning environment within every student's sphere of experience, even outside of university

life. It hosts a particular space and time for the advancement and nourishment of my intellectual, social, and ethical potential, and choices in life. It also prepares me to be a colleague of my esteemed professors who engage me in academic discussions.

These instructive exchanges of views and ideas and other educational activities in which I participate provide me an opportunity for meaningful professional growth and the pursuit of my passions.

The Dual-Campus Program as a Community

What course are you taking at UPEACE? This question causes me to realize the uniqueness of my program. Aside from being dual-campus, my program creates a distinctive identity for those taking the course. The program is designed for Asian students who journey together for 19 months through the bustling Manila and lush-green Costa Rica campuses. Our common experiences and stories weave a strong and profound bond among us. Our struggles with the formal English language within the classroom and colloquial Spanish in Ciudad Colon and San Jose make us reach out to those who understand and accept our struggles. The delight of our own cultures contextualizes our differences in the light and spirit of "unity in diversity." The multicultural setting of both campuses facilitates cultural understanding, which enables us to appreciate the beauty of our differences and similarities.

Connections: From Cameroon to Costa Rica



Franklin Ngassa
Student, Cameroon

Franklin Ngassa is currently a student in the Environmental Security and Peace program at UPEACE.

He completed his undergraduate studies in Geography and Political Science, and has experience working in several non-profit organizations in his home country.

His work with Birdlife International in the indigenous Bagyeli/ Bakola Pygmy communities in Cameroon has been particularly meaningful to him.

Franklin is passionate about environmental conservation, indigenous issues, and rugby.

Communities find their roots embedded in peace and love, strengthened by the desire to live and to work together. It is a question of facing the challenges of human nature and the philosophies by which we are bound to exist. So far, in my life, I have had only two truly deep and meaningful experiences with community. Common to these two communities has been the profound desire to achieve the dream for a better tomorrow and the capacity to transcend human differences. Another peculiarity of these communities has been the people that constitute them, people who choose to work and live for peace and love.

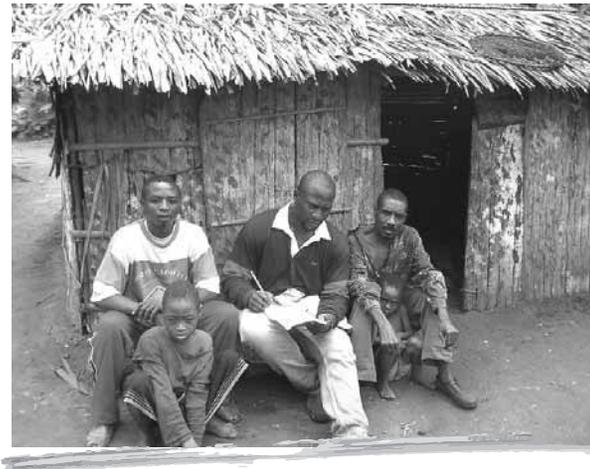
This reflection is based on my experiences with the indigenous Bagyeli/ Bakola Pygmy communities of Southern Cameroon and the UPEACE community in Costa Rica. I spent three years working as a technical assistant and site officer in the former, as part of a project designed to improve the livelihoods of the Bagyeli/ Bakola communities through the sustainable management of natural resources in the Ngoyayang Forest. Although I will live in the latter for only one year, the realities pertaining to the UPEACE community are so striking that they will always remain memorable events in my life.

The indigenous Bagyeli/ Bakola tribes of Southern Cameroon make up the second largest group of Pygmies in Central Africa. Their economy is entirely

based on hunting and the collection of forest resources. Today, they occupy the Congo Basin Forest and its fringes, cutting across national boundaries and sharing their land with other ethnic groups. As a result of their co-existence with Bantu tribes in the forested areas that they inhabit, these indigenous tribes have experienced all types of marginalization, insults, and dubious exploitation. The Bantus generally refer to members of the Bagyeli/ Bakola tribes as "My Pygmy," demonstrating a clear act of human ownership.

That notwithstanding, the Bagyeli /Bakola Pygmy communities have sought to live in harmony with their Bantu neighbors who, generally, are considered their masters. As gatherers and hunters, the Pygmy communities have always shared their bush meat and knowledge of plants and wildlife with their 'superiors', in the hope of obtaining land for their settlement by the road side. So far, they have never shown

any sign of organized revolt whatsoever. Rather, they have developed and maintained a simplistic approach to life, spiced with inborn and in-depth peace. This can be attributed to their attachment to nature as opposed to the conventional, materialistic world where wealth, money, and competition rule over every other emotion. Although their simple approach to life was a barrier to some of the project goals for which I was working, the omnipresence of peace was



far more laudable than any other goal I could have ever wanted to achieve.

Similarly, what continues to strike me about the UPEACE community is the zeal with which cultures mix under the canopy of peace. It is only by living in such a community that you can experience the strength of cultural diversity in building peace for the world. Simply knowing, accepting, and embracing someone's culture leads to mutual respect and recognition, which I believe are all prerequisites for peace.

As a typical African who has never been exposed to Western cultures, I have learned how to adapt to terms such as 'sexual orientation' and 'rainbow'. Maybe more terms are still to come, but I will remain committed to the underlining principle that made me join this community. That is striving for a better world through the promotion of peace in all aspects and levels of human interaction, with the aim of improving the quality of human life for all.

From these two communities, I have learned that it is possible to work towards a peaceful world. What is required are the right people at the right place; people who are peaceful and want to promote peace. Hopefully, the next community that we visit maybe an opportunity for each and every one of us, as UPEACE alumni, to continue working for peace. After all, you can choose to either work for peace or to work for the absence of peace - and, if the students I have met here at UPEACE are any indication, we might just be heading down the right path after all.



Mónica Acuña



Out of the Darkness



Catherine Chaweza
Student, Malawi

*Catherine Chaweza is an
M.A. Candidate in the Media,
Peace and Conflict Program
at the University for Peace.
She is the mother of two,
a girl and a boy.*

Out of the darkness into the light. A spot, a dot, a stop, a period.

Does it know it is there? Does she know? Does anybody? The innocence, the ignorance, the nothingness. Engulfed in this sense of ignorance, of nothingness, the two, in separate worlds do exist. Are they two or are they one, maybe yes, maybe not. Or maybe not just yet! When will I know, when will she know, when will they know and when will we know. All of them, in the dark.

Am Here

Am here! I guess this is the time to know, the time to feel my presence, the moment of truth is finally here. "Why are my mornings so hard? Why isn't it easy anymore? Where did all the innocence go, what is going on, who is here, in my world, in my space, in my being, in me, anybody home?" "I said am here!" "Gosh, I missed it, I lost it, somebody should be here, but it's difficult to say welcome home; I can't eat, can't smile, can't wear my favorite perfume. That's why it's difficult for me to say welcome home, welcome here, to me. But you are welcome to me. You are here with me; it's you and me, us in me."

The Wait

"Why can't I get in my dress? I can't do my exercise! There are two of us and we are getting big. Yes bigger and better. I have to see the doctor we both do." The ultrasound, the pre-natal class, the breathing session. The secrecy, the uncertainty, the waiting, the pain, the heat. "Am growing, am getting big, can you hear me, it's quiet, it's calm but I can hear you, in this darkness, and I can feel you, my heart, your heart. Together, we beat, tuk, tuk, tuk like a drum. When you are sad I feel it in here, you are happy I feel it; we cry together, we laugh together; we are together, you and

me! I want us to play together, let's kick ball, when I kick you touch me, you stop me but I want to play with you, you and me, together. For we are one, aren't we? In our two different worlds, we are one. But I love it here, it's warm and safe, though a little bit dark, if you ask me. So it hasn't changed, it's still me. In the dark." "It's the uncertainty that hurts, when will I stop being us? How is it going to be like? I can't wait, yet why am I so afraid? I wait," "I wait too," together we wait.

It's Time

"It's too small in here, way too hot at times and way way too dark if you ask me. I need to go out, to your world, to the world. It's time, my time, your time. Show me the way, show me the way out. Is it this way?" "...ouch!" "Oh no, dead end, maybe that way...Oh no! Get me out of here, out of this maze, out of the darkness. Into the world, your world, my world. The world. Let me out!"

"It hurts, it pains, and I can't breathe, please come home, to the world, your world and mine, our world. Who do you look like, what do you like? Please just come home, to the world. Make it easy for both of us, I know you can't wait, I can't wait too, together we can no longer wait. You and I, we can't wait. Ouch!" "Oh no!", "Ouch, yes we can't wait."

The Moment

Its over, we did it, you and I we made it, we are we, you are you, and I am me. You and I. Us. You cry, I smile, I look into your eyes. You are so beautiful. Welcome into the world. Into the light. Out of the dark, into the light.

Your world, my world, our world.



Tom Ketteley
Student, United Kingdom

Tom Ketteley is studying towards an M.A. in International Law and Human Rights at the University for Peace. Tom read for his B.Sc. International Relations in London, a truly global city, and has worked in various countries including Poland, Romania, and most recently Kazakhstan.

Communication and social interactions are at the core of every community. Language plays an important part in facilitating the ability of people to involve themselves within their communities, especially within global metropolitan centers. Among the most marginalized within urban environments are those who find the language barriers insurmountable. Exclusion from essential services and civic life besets those who cannot communicate. Nonetheless, urban communities are enriched by a diversity of cultures especially when different peoples come together.

This figure embodies the cosmopolitan centers which global cities have become. Each letter is taken from a different written script to represent the breadth of diversity evident within urban communities. The disparate letters join together to form a whole - the word community - just as disparate people come together within a city to form a community.

Common humanity in a global community



Dorothee Raas
Student, Switzerland

Dorothee Raas is currently studying in the International Law and the Settlement of Disputes M.A. program at the University for Peace.

She holds a degree in International Relations from the Graduate Institute of International Studies in Geneva, Switzerland.

Dorothee has traveled on five continents, and has worked with governmental and non-governmental organizations in South America, West Africa, Central Asia, and Switzerland.

She speaks German, French, English, Spanish and some basic Russian.

Nearly seven billion people live today on this planet. With airplanes able to bring us within a day from one corner of the world to the other, it feels like we have never been so close to one another. At the same time, there is a large diversity of cultures, languages, religions, and mindsets: In short, we human beings are different culturally, sometimes as specific groups, but also individually. I believe that this is the reason we travel to other places. Were we all the same, there would be nothing to discover.

Understood in the word 'community' is that we have something in common. What is the common ground that the world community, the community on this planet of so many differences, shares? I believe that the answer is found in the beautiful word of 'humanity'.

This is not about becoming sensitive, but is what I have experienced every time I have gone to live with people on other continents, who did not have much more in common with me than these invisible human values and desires.

I felt great happiness living in the slums of Peru because of the friendships I made - that have lasted until today - and because of a deep mutual understanding I found with the people: of who we are, why we are sad or happy, and what we should do in life.

Not surprisingly, when the discussion turned to political matters, we did not always have the same point of view, which goes back - in addition to our personality - to our education and how a particular situation has been presented to us as students, so influencing and shaping our future judgment.

During my months in West Africa, I did not feel alone or far from home. Although I had never eaten such food, never

worn such clothes, never heard this language before, I felt as if I was at home, mostly because people understood what would please me or what would make me sad; and they felt the same way.

Here as well, political issues could divide people. However, going to the basis of our deep wishes and desires, we always found a common ground, often more easily while talking one-on-one than in a group, where everyone feels some pressure to say certain things.

Similar situations occurred to me on a daily basis in Eastern Europe, Central Asia, and Australia.

I can be best friends with someone who has a greatly different background. I can understand this person's problems, concerns and thoughts at an inter-personal level and they can understand me as well. But, as mentioned, when it comes to politics, things may change. Whether Mao was good or bad for China, whether Hitler was intelligent, whether human rights should be universal and be given especially to women... such topics can divide people, and discussions over them hardly ever end. Or, the problem is that such discussions hardly ever get started in a productive way: many people feel annoyed and have already made up their minds about the supposed opinion of the person they are conversing with before they have listened to the explanations for his or her thoughts: we think we can picture where the person in front of us grew up, his or her general background, maybe his or her current job and education that, for example, do not encourage criticism of a current regime. We guess that we understand that we cannot understand each other.

It is often said that we live in a global world. Do we? How much in this world really gets globally exchanged, besides a

bunch of jet setters or economic items a country needs from another part of the world? What about global values, the exchange of opinions and understanding?

Is there something like a globalization of perceptions? Or does the process of globalization impose certain ideas to create an impression of some kind of understanding?

Let's take our so-called Western values. What we suppose to be polite, clothes we see as formal, and even rules of international law get exported slowly to all parts of the world. Is this a new imperialistic behavior? Is it imposing something by destroying something else?

No one can physically force people to say what we think or to wear what we design, but there is eventually a kind of moral or mental force that makes people believe that they are only advanced, modern and good if they are like the West.

A very misleading perception.

As said in the beginning, what constitutes our global community are our differences that are based on our common humanity. If everyone becomes the same, the mystery of life, the beauty that makes it worth living, risks disappearing.

Sometimes I am in a bad mood, sometimes I just do not like someone, and usually I am not able to explain why. It feels like this person is so different from me, and that we could probably never get along with each other. I can have this same feeling for Europeans and U.S. Americans as for Latin people, Africans or Asians. So what is it about our differences? Such personal differences seem to be absolutely independent of differences we can find among the countries and cultures all across the world.

Having stated that we all share a common humanity which should allow us to communicate with everyone on this

planet, with everyone of the global community, I wondered how this could happen. I have also stated that I generally do not encounter serious problems talking to people on a personal level, no matter where they come from. However, problems start when our conversation goes to the understanding of our world, perceptions, and politics.

We can do something about this. In our university, where the world meets in a kind of micro-cosmos, we - from countries of this world so far apart - should meet to discuss the hottest topics. The universality of human rights, women's rights, democracy, international economics, labor rights, the concept of development... Coming with different educational backgrounds, religions, languages, etc., we have to learn how to express our views in a way and language that allow us to understand what seems very alien to us and what we might think we would never believe.

As long as people do not understand, they do not know how to value differences. It is the differences among us that make our global community so beautiful. But we have a lot of mental reframing and sharpening before us, to be able to value the contribution that each of us can make, built on our common -let me say it again- basis of humanity.



Mirian Vilela

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At the heart of the Earth Charter lies an ethic of care - care for oneself, for one another, and care for the large community of life in all its diversity. To care generally means to value, love, and have concern for the 'other'. Conversations about this theme in class last year brought to my attention that it is easier to care for who or what we know; for what we are familiar with. It seems that the closer we are to someone or a given situation, the more we care and feel inspired to act. Therefore, for us to have a profound sense of caring for the larger community of life, it seems to me that we need to understand and feel the close interconnectedness between all human beings, as well as between human needs and nature. This shows the need for all of us to broaden our vision and see the interrelationship between these areas.

Principle 2 of the Earth Charter deepens the notion of care, to suggest that we need to care with understanding, compassion, and love. This involves knowledge and the mind, as well as feelings and the heart. I like to think of this principle, as any other principle of the Earth Charter, as an invitation for us to move toward an ethic of care. The idea is not to impose this upon others, but rather to let each of our lives be our message to the world. In doing so, we will inspire others to see the interconnections of our everyday lives, and act accordingly with a deep sense of respect and care for the larger community of life.

I like to think of these as an aspiration that needs to be crystallized into our everyday lifestyles and into the ways our communities are organized. Without a deep sense of care, coupled with a clear sense of the interconnectedness between all of us and the various issues humanity now faces, people will probably lack the motivation to act.

As Leonardo Boff discusses in his book *Saber Cuidar* ('Knowing How to Care'), "Humanity is currently facing a crisis point. This is a symptom of the lack of care through which we deal with life's important realities: the environment; millions and millions of children being condemned to work as adults; inadequate public health; and lack of access to education. This is a crisis of our civilization. To get out of this crisis, we need a new ethic. An ethic that needs to emerge from something that is essential in every human being and common across all human beings. This human essence resides more in the sense of care than in any reasoning or will...

... Everything that exists and lives deserves to be cared for in order to continue to exist and live: a plant, an animal, a child, an elder, the planet Earth."¹

¹Boff, Leonardo. *Saber cuidar: ética do humano-compaixão pela terra*. São Paulo: Editora Vozes, 1999.

Moments

Mauricio Mireles



Who I Really Am Within the Community of Life



Koffi Sawyer
Student, Cameroon

Koffi Henry Sawyer was born in Buea, Cameroon. He obtained a Bachelor of Science and a post-graduate degree in Political Science in 2003 and 2004 from the Universities of Buea and Yaoundé II, respectively. In 2006, he graduated with a Diplôme d'Etudes Supérieures Spécialisées (DESS) in Strategy, Defense, Security and Conflict Management, and is currently studying for a Master's in International Law and Human Rights at UPEACE.

Koffi has worked with a humanitarian NGO, Ndolo Sisters, in Cameroon; the UN Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda;

I am Koffi Henry Sawyer, a dark-in-complexion 25 year old; bilingual in French and English; Cameroonian of the *Bakweri* tribe; born and raised in a little village called Bokwaongo, situated at the foot of Mt. Cameroon, which is the highest peak in West Africa. I am a vegetarian, a passionate snail eater, and a moderate drinker. I was brought up in, and follow, the Christian faith. I have a Master's Degree, liberal views, permanent afro hair-style, and a fairly bushy moustache.

This is the physical 'me', and I can only say who I really am because there is 'the other' - he or she who I am not. I would not be able to say who I am without this 'other' - this other has a wide range, encompassing not only the fair-skinned, the ten-year old, the Spanish speaker, the Tutsi from the country of a thousand hills, the meat eater, the conservative Muslim who wears a turban, but also the entire community of life including all those things that help to sustain our life. All these make us who we are - by showing us who we are not. Can we even begin to imagine a vacuous 'individual world' where no one or nothing else surrounds us? Who would we measure up to, and who would be our source of inspiration, sustenance, and self-identification if there were no 'other'?

Not only important is my neighbor who brings me piping hot soup when I catch a fever, but so are the trees that help in cleaning the air I breathe and providing me with all the vitamins I need. Important, too, are the maggots that break down non-living materials and add fertility to my soil; snails that serve as food; the erupting mountains; the starry skies; the moving clouds; and all the bodies of water that 'live' in their own right and make life what it is to us! I am

only who I am because all of these things are. They also live and deserve respect because there is no 'me' without them! Ernest, my white, Canadian friend; Ishmael my Muslim friend; my illiterate pygmy friend Jamboni; and Dorothy my conservative pork-eating friend and I all sit together, discussing the wonders of the community of life on which we all depend and to which we all belong.

We all eat, sleep, drink, love, feel, and depend on this community - on this 'other' - for our identity and survival. So it is and so shall it always be because without the other, we are not. Love, mutual care, and above all, utter respect for diversity in oneness should characterize our relationship with 'the other'. I am who I am not only because there is a whiter human being than myself, but also because there are insects, plants, other animals - in short the wider community of life.

I am one of God's creations among many within this community. An appreciation of the entire community of life is the beginning of one's understanding of what or who one really is. As we pass through this 'stage of life' where my 'Cameroonian-ness', my 'African-ness', my Christianity, my love for snails, my complexion, my tribe, and my political affiliation don't really matter, then you and I will be at peace. We share something more in common, in simply being human beings - be it Tutsi, republican, communist, Asian, Muslim, black, red, or white. It does not even end there. Other non-human beings also partake in our environment, from whom we greatly benefit and who make this world a more beautiful place - plants, animals, the earth, the mountains, the smiling stars, the bright-faced sun, and the ever-moving bodies of water.

*and is a Student Executive
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He is a great admirer
of communal life.*

Who am I therefore?

I am you, and you are me, and we are all part of one inseparable whole. If you knew who you really are, who 'they' really are, and who I really am, you wouldn't want to hurt, destroy, or kill me or them because we seem 'different'. Rather, we would eat and drink in the same calabash because I -like you and 'they'- am wonderfully created out of God's image. We are all in this cosmos forming the beautiful community of life, where even the most microscopic organisms have their role to play even if they, together with plants and others, might not necessarily have a language and an intellect as developed as us. WE all ARE, and should uphold the other if we value our own identity and existence; an identity and existence inextricably intertwined with 'the other' with whom I was made to share this astonishing community of life!!



Lisa Jokivirta
Earth Charter Intern,
Canada/Finland

Lisa Jokivirta is a nomad who has spent the past six years working and studying in Finland, France, Canada, Costa Rica, and the UK.

She is currently undertaking a Master's in Development and International Cooperation, and has previously worked in various NGOs, the Canadian Embassy in Paris, and as a freelance writer and editor.

She is an island girl, violin player, friend of the Earth Charter, listener, Finnish-Canadian, believer in people, passions, and possibilities, and lover of sushi.

Lisa is not exactly sure what she envisions doing in the future but, whatever it is, it is going to be something that she loves.

On Nomadic Beginnings

"Wherever you place your foot, there rests a blessing." -Rumi

My last name, in Finnish, means 'flowing river'. And, ever since I was little, I have been fascinated with finding a world where borders do not exist. I used to spend hours reading, writing, telling, and being told stories. It didn't matter whether they were good or bad, fictitious or real; the beauty resided in the mere fact that the imagination knows no limitations, that anything and everything could ring true. My favorite past-time, growing up, was to hang out at the local train station, post office, bus stop, ice cream stand or, on a lucky day, airport – anywhere and everywhere I could watch the paths of wandering souls intersect, even for the briefest moment in time. I guess it is hardly surprising, then, that I grew up to be a nomad. As soon as I got hold of my first passport, I knew that I had joined the global body of wanderers, travelers, pilgrims, and nomads who belong to no one place and to everywhere at once; who challenge those boundaries that restrict, constrain, and confine us, and re-map more promising ways of living together in this world.

The following, then, is a stream of random thoughts, stories, and spontaneous moments of connectedness that I have experienced during the course of my travels thus far. Looking back, I realize that, wherever the undercurrents have led me, there has always been a connection, a lesson, a story to be unearthed, wherever I have planted my feet and for whatever duration in time...

On Leaving Home

"Begin at once to live, and count each separate day as a separate life." - Seneca

It was a classic scene at the airport: mother weeping as daughter sets off into the world, and daughter beaming, ready to seize the world. We all know when we reach a defining moment in our lives – one of those moments when our lives take an unexpected turn, when a new chapter begins. I knew that this was one of those moments. I took a deep breath; realized that I had absolutely no idea what lay ahead of me; smiled; and, simply let go. It was the most liberating feeling in the world.

I remember that first year of living and working in London unlike any other. It was as though I was suddenly awake, without ever having realized that I had been half-asleep. My senses were heightened; I walked around with a certain sense of awe; and, as clichéd as it might sound, I was driven by a fierce determination to make the most of each waking hour. It wasn't because I fell in love with London as a city, as such. Rather, it was because a whole realm of possibilities had opened up before me – I was completely unknown in a city completely unknown to me. It was a state of anonymity, ambiguity and indeterminacy, but also one of transition, openness and you-can-be-anything-you-want-to-be. It was a kind of sudden death – stepping out of your usual identity and comfort zone – with the possibility for re-birth. There was something so magical about being the stranger who had come to town.

On Shootings and Spontaneous Love

"You have not lived a perfect day, unless you've done something for someone who will never be able to repay you." --Ruth Smeltzer

I have been lucky not to come across much trouble over the course of my travels, but I have been even luckier to come

across beautiful individuals when I have. I was once out (making rather sad attempts at) salsa dancing at a club along the Caribbean Coast. It was a night like any other – a sea of bodies pulsating to Latino beats – when, all of a sudden, a fight broke out. Bottles shattering, heads down. A few seconds later, a car pulled up. Shots firing, bodies down.

I don't remember much about what happened that night – you always hear that these sorts of things happen fast, and they really do. All I know is that, before I could even duck down, a warm body plunged on top of mine; whispered a few consoling words; and, when the shooting stopped, pushed me to go. I did not get his name. I did not even get to thank him. All I remember are his eyes, and the genuine look of care and kindness within them.

I still sometimes think back to that night. Who was that man? What is his story? How can we –could even he?– begin to explain such spontaneous acts of love?

On Language as a Lens

"Oneness is not a miracle. It is the diversity of the one that is the miracle." – R. Field

My classmates and I once traveled to Lapland, close to the Arctic Circle, on a field trip as part of our Master's program. We spent one evening by a bonfire with a few local Sami people – the largest indigenous group in Europe, inhabiting parts of northern Sweden, Norway, Finland, and the Kola Peninsula of Russia. Traditionally, the Sami were a nomadic people whose livelihood was based on reindeer herding. Territorial disputes with national governments have meant that only a minority continues to enjoy a nomadic lifestyle, although the Sami still view the entire region as their home.

We listened to the jokes and stories of Antti and Petri that night, while preparing fish we had caught earlier that day. I was touched by many of the stories that they shared with us,

but one random fact particularly stuck to mind: in the Sami language, there are sixteen ways of saying 'us' and no real way of saying 'I'. Imagine how it must feel to see the world through this lens, to naturally accept our connectedness to the community of life!

On Borders and Belongings

*"What the border cuts across, the story cuts across"
– J. B. Harley*

During my time in India, I met a Palestinian student who opened up about the conflict in his country. He described some of the harsh realities of his everyday life – water shortages, constant tension, the feeling of being imprisoned between walls. The only real hope he has ever experienced for his country, he claimed, came from having been roommates with an Israeli student during his college years. Although they were never able to directly talk about the issue at hand, it was simply a matter of putting a human face to 'the other', of knowing which sports he likes, how he orders his coffee, on which side of the bed he sleeps. In short, all of those things that make us relate to one another, which re-humanize us.

We live in a world of borders. Between us and nature. Us and God. Us and them. Us and us. The question, for each of us, becomes: within which borders are you living? And, how long are you going to wait to break out of the lines?

On Simplicity

"Anyone who's spent time on her knees in a berry patch or flower bed comes to see this attention to small things as a form of prayer, a way of vanishing, for one sweet hour, into whatever crumb of creation we are privileged to take into our hands." - Phillip Simmons

Some of my most profound encounters with community have been, ironically, times spent away from all forms of

civilization. I particularly remember one summer with my Aunt Gitta at her cabin, in The-Middle-Of-Nowhere, Finland. We would spend entire days picking mushrooms and berries from the nearby forest; getting our hands dirty (admittedly, hers more than mine) in the vegetable garden; preparing the pike that we had caught earlier in the afternoon; rowing out to visit friends on the island nearby. In the evenings, a profound sense of connection emerged around the dinner table – the dishes were always very simple, but a certain sense of gratitude came from having gathered and prepared our food together. This would be followed by evenings at the sauna, featuring skinny dipping sessions and a few shots of vodka in classic Finnish style.

"Taking time off" is often perceived as a self-indulgent sport, particularly when practiced regularly. Personally, I don't think there is a greater contribution to the world, than taking time off for silent reflection. When we are immersed in the woods, mountains, fields, or berry batches, we are reminded: there is no need to fit in. Everything already does. And, so we, too, become more centered, grounded, rooted, and connected. And, even for a brief moment, we are once again reminded of our belonging within the beautiful family of life.

On Airplanes and Attractions

In everyone's life, at some time, our inner fire goes out. It is then burst into flame by an encounter with another human being. We should all be thankful for those people who rekindle the inner spirit. - Albert Schweitzer

I was sitting in the lounge, waiting to board a flight to New York. Suddenly, a man walked up to me and simply stated: "You and I, we need to sit together." Once I boarded the plane, the air hostess informed me that there had indeed been a 'request' to switch seats. In my classic travel, a-little-more-daring-than-usual mode, I automatically agreed. The next thing I knew, I was sitting next to a beautiful Columbian stranger, for the next six hours to come.

We spent the first hour in classic first date mode, playing all of those games we are expected to play. But, this didn't last long. Somewhere in between the small talk, we both realized that we could let down our guards – we had nothing to lose. We would soon be going on our separate paths, and all that would remain was the memory of this six-hour encounter between two wandering souls. And, suddenly, this seemingly confident-verging-on-cocky Columbian began to share with me his deepest thoughts – about life, about heartache, about his fears, flings, dreams, weaknesses and loneliness. He showed me his vulnerabilities, and I showed him mine. And, as we said goodbye, I realized that I deeply cared about a stranger whom I had known for six hours and whom I will probably never see again.

Ultimately, perhaps this is community: letting go of all those masks we fear we cannot live without and know we cannot live within. Perhaps it is about breaking down all of those boundaries that are meant to protect us, and letting all of our vulnerabilities pour out onto the world. Sometimes, it might not be pretty, but what could be more refreshing, beautiful, or real?

On Getting into the Groove

"When we are self-conscious, we cannot be wholly aware; we must throw ourselves out first. This throwing ourselves away is the act of creativity. So, when we wholly concentrate, like a child in play, or an artist at work, then we share in the act of creating." - Madeleine L'Engle

More than anything else in this world, I love watching people lose themselves in the moment. It doesn't matter if it's dancing, bungee jumping, stamp-collecting, or playing the didgeridoo – it's the most beautiful sight in the world.

I remember watching an improv session in Montreal. Two female vocalists came on stage. The first began; her voice raw, untamed, intuitive. The other joined, and soon, energies

merged into one. The audience was mesmerized – clapping, singing, swaying. An exchange of energies; who was feeding off of whom?

Performance –or living, for that matter– is simply about being called to respond.

A sudden death and re-birth.

A brief escape from the body;

an instant of being the beauty in this world.

On Returning Home

“The lesson is to have seen a thousand landscapes, and to return home as if seeing it for the first time.” - Buddha

I return home, after a long time away. My body aches to be back, and my restlessness subsides. I look at my mom, my dad, my sister – how grounded they are, without ever really having left at all. I meet up with a few old friends. With some, no time has passed. With others, small talk, awkward silences, attempts to fill-in-the-spaces. Every meeting for a reason and a season, I tell myself. How lucky to have once crossed paths, and we wish each other well on our way.

I walk around my neighborhood, my old university, the inner harbor. Few familiar faces. Details, buildings, trees I had never noticed before. The same sounds of the ocean. The blowing wind. Awe, excitement, nervousness.

And, suddenly, laughter. The stranger who has come back to town...

On Nomadic Minds

“May you walk on holy ground.” – Miriam Winter

Simple complexity



Israa Hamad

Student, Sudan

Israa Hamad is a Sudanese citizen of the world who has lived on four different continents, and has worked for the United Nations in New York, Western Sahara and many World Conferences. She is currently a student in International Law and Human Rights at the University for Peace.



Maybe a rolling stone gathers no moss, but a traveling earthling (or other) gathers experience, sights, sounds, colors, smells, emotions, knowledge... the stuff from which the fiber of life is woven. There is a reason we were

once called hunter-gathers; we still are. We hunt our dreams and gather our memories; this hunting and gathering of life never stops; and, through experiences that are never quite the same but still very alike, we evolve, we create, and we form bonds. When the bond is shared by more than a couple of souls, we become part of a community of peers. One earthling (or other) can be part of many communities at the same time. When the 'I' becomes an 'us', you have a couple; then 'us' becomes 'we': a community. We the liberals, we the women, we the students, we the party lovers, we the music lovers, we the struggling peoples, we the activists, we the free. WE. This sense of community WE recreate where we go, we take it with us, and share it, creating yet another community of those who share their WE with THEM, until



there are a multiplicity of communities. This diversity is what makes our beauty, our strength, but also our weakness. OUR sense of superiority over THEM, because we are more powerful, make better tea, play better soccer, are more developed...heck WE made all this possible, this civilization, this advancement...you get the point.

Somehow this free flow of thoughts naturally leads me to the Quran. Is it because I am a proud Muslim woman? Or is it simply because I feel the need to share a piece of wisdom? Or, maybe I feel compelled to defend a misunderstood part of one of my communities? Whatever it is, let me not stray from what I wanted to share with you, my newest community. In the Quran, it says that God made us into nations and tribes, so that WE may know each other (Al-hujrat 49:13). Additionally, "And amongst his signs (of being God) is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the variations in your languages and colors. Verily, in that are signs for those who know" (Quran 30:21).

Even in the most precious book I own, diversity is celebrated as a beautiful, divine creation, and those who can't see this are missing out on a "gift." Communities should reinforce our sense of belonging and our pride in who we are, but they should also encourage curiosity, tolerance and the love of diversity... the love of this divine gift...WE!



Pagina en blanco

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II. Walls and Borders



Pag blanca

Building Walls in the Free World



Ross Ryan
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It may seem odd to dedicate this article to the emerging political trend of building walls, given that so much has been written recently about the juggernaut of globalization and the seeming irrelevance of national boundaries, but such are the ironies of our time. Only twenty years after former US President Ronald Reagan famously called for former General Secretary of the Soviet Union Mikhail Gorbachev to tear down the Berlin Wall, walls are on the rise again. And this time, they are being built and/or maintained by nations from what Reagan referred to in his same speech at the Berlin Wall as the "free world" - the United States, Britain (in Ireland), Israel, and Spain (in Morocco) being only the most glaring examples.

Taken together with the overpowering force of commercial globalization, people on the outside of many of these walls may be forgiven for feeling, as Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva has put it, that rich nations practice protectionist policies when it suits their interests. Even as they urge poorer nations to continue relaxing border restrictions for the ready access of foreign businesses. Certainly, for average citizens of walled out nations, the freedoms of the free world - freedoms of movement and travel in particular - seem to be enjoyed at a level somewhere above their heads. While corporations may be free to move their investments and operations from one country to another with fewer and fewer national restrictions, the movements of actual human beings are obstructed by fences and walls.

Of course, advocates of such barriers argue that they are needed for practical reasons of security. The people behind public policy interest group Let Freedom Ring Inc., for example, argue that a separation barrier between Mexico and the United States will keep the latter safe by controlling immigration, blocking the supply of controlled substances, and reducing the risk of terrorism. It is my own opinion that the best such barriers can do is to provide an expensive illusion of security. At worst, they may actually fuel conflict,

impede peace processes, and promote sectarianism. The first questionable claim made by those lobbying for a fence across the southern border of the US, is that immigrants are automatically a threat, counted among drug smugglers and terrorists. The United States, of all nations, should recognize the value of immigration, given the large percentage of foreign born scientists, artists, athletes, soldiers, and workers who have brought prosperity to that country, many of them without proper documentation. Demonizing the very people on whose labour the economy depends is a sure symptom of irrational xenophobia, and calls to mind the old adage about biting the hand that feeds you.

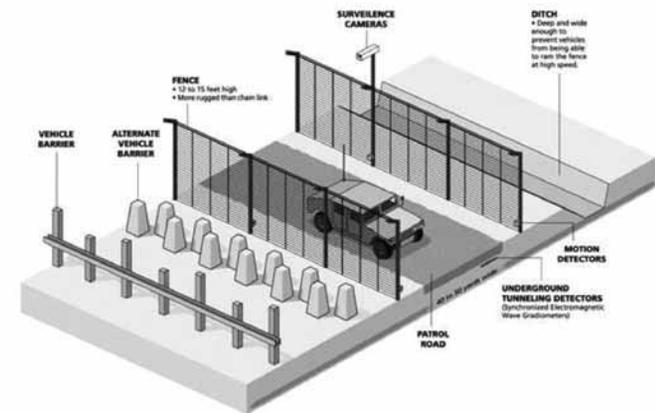
Of course immigrants are not automatically perfect either; they are simply human beings and, as such, deserve to be treated with the same dignity and respect we would like to be treated with ourselves. As High Representative of the EU Common Security and Foreign Policy Javier Solana told a group of reporters in Mexico last May, "A wall that separates one country from another is not something that I like or that the European Union members like [...] we don't think walls are reasonable instruments to stop people from crossing into a country; [...potential immigrants should be treated] like people, not like criminals." (CNN 03/05/2007) Broadly speaking, the circumstances driving immigration are understandable and have affected all human societies at one time or another. They should be used, therefore, as a natural starting point for cross cultural integration and mutual benefit, not as an excuse for isolation and exclusionism.

As far as drug smuggling is concerned, even a remote familiarity with the principles of supply and demand should be enough to dispel the myth that a wall - no matter how high or wide - could possibly stop the supply of controlled substances so long as American citizens continue to demand them. The only likely effect of building such a concrete symbol of prohibition would be, ironically, to increase the

value of illicit substances and therefore encourage internal corruption and the activities of international organized crime. The other reason to build the wall, terrorism, is possibly the most emotionally charged and politically sensitive of all the terms used to describe potential threats to the free world today. Before recoiling in fear at the very thought of "OTMs" ("other than Mexicans") sneaking across the desert into the southern states of the US, however, and paying millions of dollars for the construction and maintenance of a giant security barrier to keep them out, I should hope that the American public would demand to know exactly how many of the OTMs apprehended at the Mexico/America border until now have actually been found to be part of Al Qaeda or some other terrorist network. In other words, the costs of the project should relate to the actual risks, not mere speculation or emotional manipulation.

It is of no little significance to this cost/risk analysis that there are enough weapons (conventional, nuclear, or improvised), as well as violent ideas for conflict resolution and political persuasion north, east, and west of the Mexican border, to ensure that terror and insecurity will persist. This will remain unaffected by the construction of even the biggest and most repulsive barrier possible. Peace and security, in any meaningful sense, require much more empathy and thoughtfulness, and much more human interaction than any such wall can possibly offer.

As a final thought, it is worth noting that this latest geopolitical fad of wall building is nothing new. The citizens of Ur, Troy, and Copan all ducked behind walls in the ancient world, and ultimately found the security they provided to be as illusory as that of the Soviet's Iron Curtain in the modern age. Surely we have realized by now that security cannot come from guarding the lines that divide us from one another. The only chance we have is to unite as a global community and to turn our attention to the sources of insecurity that we commonly face: poverty, environmental degradation, oppression, disease, ignorance, and war.



The fence idea proposed by Let Freedom Ring, Inc. (www.weneedafence.org)

Always a Country, Never a Nation



Mauricio Mireles
Student, Mexico

Mauricio Mireles completed his Bachelor's in Sociology and Anthropology at Eastern Oregon University in the United States, and is currently undertaking his Master's in Environmental Security and Peace at the United Nations-mandated University for Peace.

Mauricio has spent the past six years working and studying in Mexico, Thailand, the USA, and now Costa Rica. His interests include football, debate, public speaking, and photography.

As a little boy, I remember hearing a story that always made me very sad, but which nevertheless clearly illustrates what I consider to be the biggest problem in my country. The story goes something like this: "There are two jars in which grasshoppers have been trapped. Both jars are wide open, but for some reason, grasshoppers are only escaping from one of the jars while the other remains quite full. The jar from which no grasshoppers have escaped is full of Mexican grasshoppers. And, what is the reason for this? It's because instead of helping each other, instead of allowing their peers to climb on top of each other, every time the Mexican grasshoppers feel someone climbing ahead of them, they pull them down while thinking to themselves "If I do not go up, nobody goes up."

When I was asked to write a piece for this publication explaining the relation between peace, cooperation, and community in my country, I felt extremely hesitant about it. I concluded that, unless I could talk about the exact opposite, there would be no point in bothering.

In Mexico, we have never stopped being strangers among ourselves. We have built strong social structures that make it impossible for people to be equal. We have built a country, but never a nation. In the words of a good friend of mine, Mexico is many different countries within the same borders. My country is divided between the rich and the poor, between the light skinned European-looking people and the dark skinned Indian-looking people. The lighter your skin, the greater your chances for social mobility, the greater opportunities you will have for becoming successful in our cultural context. Racism and discrimination exist and prevail in our society - you might not see violence at a superficial glance, but it certainly takes very little to find deep hatred and resentment among our people.

Colonization happened almost 500 years ago, but still we have not learned to erase its legacy of indirect ruling from

our hearts. Our politicians still play to separate us, still focus on socio-economic and ethnic differences in order to divide our society and further fracture our communities. We have learned to distrust our neighbor, our co-workers, our police, our government, and ultimately ourselves. "El que no tranza no avanza" is a common saying that means: "s/he who does not cheat will not progress." These are our lessons, our education, our self-defense mechanisms, and the way that we attempt to survive in a fractured and dysfunctional society.

Our nationalism only awakens when our national football team plays a match; during 90 minutes, the world will hear our "Cielito Lindo"; our hearts will pump with pride and the colors of our flag will be displayed everywhere, providing the illusion of a great nation. But, once the match finishes, the effects of the alcohol dissipate and the lights of the stadium go off, Mexican nationalism vanishes once again.

Being a "full blooded Mexican" who lived in the United States during my college years, I could not help but feel truly intrigued by the many Mexican-Americans (legal, illegal, first or second generation) that I met during this time. Until that moment in my life, I had never met people so proud of being Mexican - to them it meant everything, from their food, to their traditions, to their religion, and ultimately, to their identity. Oftentimes, I became mesmerized by their hospitality and willingness to help without asking for anything in return. To them, being Mexican meant becoming part of a family that was absent, becoming a substitute for the missing beloveds that lived across the border and could not be there. It was much more than a simple network - it was a real commitment to your fellow beings.

I cannot even begin to contextualize the irony of finding a true sense of Mexican community living outside of Mexico! Especially when, within our borders, there is such a need for community, and yet this remains a lacking reality. How can it

be possible for those who had nothing - no jobs, no education - and those who left behind a bitter life, to understand that working together as a community would improve and facilitate their chances of having a better life? Whereas those who stayed behind only care for themselves? There is a lesson to be learned from our fellow countrymen and women, a teaching that illustrates that struggle and hard work can be a good mentor. Or, in the words of Gabriel Garcia Marquez, "Virtue is the legitimate daughter of necessity."

People often say that nationalism is a dangerous thing, that it can only bring hatred and negative feelings. I disagree. I believe that nationalism is a necessary condition for a healthy society - the result of a good relationship between the state and the nation. When people think of nationalism, they often think of Zionism or Nazism. But, little do we reflect upon how much nationalism has - or how much it can - help other nations to stick together. Only in a state where a certain degree of pride exists is a civilian willing to work for the greater good; unless a man or a woman truly believes in his or her country, no personal sacrifice will ever take place. A great society is one that favors those values that bring us together, and one which diminishes those that set us apart.

The one symbol in our country that has succeeded in creating some sense of community, identity, and pride among our people was, and still is, 'La Virgen de Guadalupe.' During the beginning of Mexico's independence movement, when the Priest Hidalgo called on his fellow countrymen to join him in war, he lifted the image of 'La Guadalupana' and used it as the flag under which people came together. Hidalgo was well aware that the peasants in 1810 did not follow him because of the principles of freedom and equality that he preached about; instead, they followed the one symbol that meant 'nation' to them. The Virgin of Guadalupe perfectly blended Native and Spanish ideologies, bringing together Indigenous and Catholic traditions, to give birth to a dark skinned virgin. The mythical nature of this icon is still something that remains dormant in our spirit.

However, reviving the past to confront the challenges of tomorrow is not the answer for my country. The key issue facing Mexico is our lack of commitment to a common identity - not one that sacrifices the richness of our multiculturalism for the sake of simplistic equality, but one that dares to dignify our differences, to create a place where a Mexican-Jew and a Mexican Zapoteca can become equal while remaining harmoniously different. We must find new incentives within ourselves to understand that we deserve not only a great life, but also a great nation. I believe that Mexicans, as well as all nations, should learn to be proud of what they have, of who they are, and perhaps more importantly, of what they share.

Johnny Goes to War



Jessica Moe
Student, Canada

*Jessica Moe
is a perpetual learner.
She is fascinated
with stories, stars,
people on buses,
and electrons
(not an exhaustive list).
Jessica is an avid surfer
and traveler,
and loves the beauty
and tranquility of nature.*

As a child, Johnny was a quiet, thoughtful boy. He would spend hours lost in thought as he contemplated the clouds or visited the many adventurous lands of his imagination. By the time he was 18, he had grown into a lean muscular frame but hadn't lost the starry-eyed wonder of his childhood. It took only the confident voice on the radio and the proud, persuasive posters to convince Johnny to go to war.

Dolce et decorum est, pro patria mori.²

It was a fresh spring day when Johnny set off. He held himself upright, clenching his muscles to camouflage a tingling nervousness. He felt serious, mature, proud to be serving his country and family. His eyes glimmered with the excitement of encountering the battlefields of his boyhood daydreams, those places where dragons were slain and heroes created. His father's eyes shone with pride as he clapped his son's broad shoulder. His mother fought back tears as she put on a courageous smile. Here was little Johnny, their only son, all grown up. The train whistle blew shrilly and whisked Johnny away.

Dolce et decorum est, pro patria mori.

Then came months of gunshots and cannons, of smoke, trenches and bayonets, of blood mixed with rain and mud and human filth. Johnny's eyes learned the glint of raw fear. The dragons he had valiantly conquered in his dreams were dwarfed by the shock, the stench of death.

One day, Johnny came eye to eye with his enemy. In him, he saw an echo of himself: of innocence stripped by bloodied hands, of frantic bloodshot eyes, of fear encrusted by mud and adrenaline. Johnny heard the gunshots. One, two, three. He was watching himself, as if in a slow motion video, fall to his knees, mouth open in passive shock, eyes glazed and glassy. He felt warm blood and cold steel, and then, Johnny felt no more.

At Johnny's funeral, the soldiers stood at command, in the rigid ceremonial pose they had come to know and dread. Theirs were faces of boys come to age too soon, fighting back the urge to scream, to cry, to run, because such are things that grown men don't or shouldn't do.

At home, the lieutenant broke the news, cap in hand. Johnny's father felt weak, robbed of breath, and leaned against the wall to brace faltering knees. Johnny's mother collapsed to the floor, taken by uncontrollable wails. Johnny, their only son, gone.

Dolce et decorum est, pro patria mori.

²A Latin phrase, which roughly translates: "it is sweet and proper to die for one's country." The phrase is from Roman poet Horace's *Odes*, and was borrowed by Wilfred Owen in his poem *Dulce Et Decorum Est* about the horrors of the First World War.



Maggie Schwalbach
Student, United States

Maggie Schwalbach is a Master's candidate in Media, Peace and Conflict Studies at the University for Peace. She has traveled extensively in the Middle East, Europe, North, Central, and South America... but Buenos Aires still captures her heart.

Can you love someone so much that you think your chest will explode? When he doesn't choose you, why the empty ache in your insides, below the heart, right in the gut? Reading through old e-mails. Just seeing his name makes me smile. Reading the messages, seeing the holes, overcome by the emotion.

Hardest reading mine. They are my own rawness mixed with trying-to-be-complex- mysterious-alluring-desirable. I can't fool myself when I know. I can't play tough when I see my heart on those lines. How cleverly written, how carefully masked the word construction. Play the character of the carefree seductress. He'll play the role of let-you-down-easy.

But thank you for letting me down easy, chapa. I couldn't have taken the blow in a direct hit. Maybe emotions need to be padded in paragraphs. Start at the beginning with flattery. Move on to the sweet memories. Use the code word "connection" for love. Don't say love. I tried it, but only distanced by e-mail.

When does it evolve from fantasy into reality? The reality of stability. The butterflies leave then, I guess. I wouldn't know. I can only say I love you with code words like "Esta es la primera vez para mi" as we're lying down and I feel so warm and scared. And you respond, "Me hace sentir mal porque no puedo devolvértelo"... Did you add, "como me gustaría" or "como nos merecemos" or did I add that to pad the rejection of your confession that wasn't really an I love you, too.

I can hide behind the fact that I didn't say it directly, not in person. Not in those raw, exposed words. It's codes with us. Poetry and songs and jokes. But I swear to God, I really do, I swear it was real. This isn't me forcing myself to feel it. Now I force myself to try to get through the day without thinking about it. You may or may not ever know what I'm

going through. But I wonder if sometimes you think about me so that your gut aches, or long for me so that the area below your belly summersaults in flashes.

Are there moments when you are lying there with her and you think of me? Or do I come to you only in the mundane vacancies, when you're running errands or having dinner wishing for escape. I know I'm your escape. I know that. You are mine, too. Foreign and fantastical.

If I sent you this message you wouldn't understand. Or maybe you would, which is what makes my chest heave again with tears. Somehow we do understand each other.

Our magic. It would have to fade. It would inevitably have to fade when the layers of velvet language and metaphors are stripped down and we're left with the disillusion of differences in background and nationality and age. You would never be able to fully understand my friends or family. I'm enthralled with cafes and asados and the seductive shhhs in your yo, but eventually you'd learn that I overeat and procrastinate and advocate for causes that I don't really understand. I'm a humanist, trained in bullshit. I'm not elegant, but I felt elegant with you in the light of such a beautiful city.

"Me perfumeo todavía," you quoted. And then it fades, right? It settles into pajamas and grown-up routines.

So you settle down and I move on, and we both hope that our hearts won't shrivel.

~Postscript~

This poem is about losing love. It speaks to loss of community... a tiny community of two... and more specifically, the loss of a shared language that two people share when they are in love.

The Only Flower in the World



Yoko Fukushima
Student, Japan

Yoko Fukushima is from the town of Yokohama, which is a multicultural city with a big port, next to Tokyo in Japan. She majored in International Politics in her undergraduate studies, and is now pursuing a Master's degree in International Peace Studies. Having traveled and lived in many countries so far, she has faced the difficulties of accepting different cultures. Her essay is about the challenges she's experienced in accepting these differences.

"Accept and respect differences" is easier to say than to do. However, no matter how difficult it is, it is an imperative for world peace, because "cultural diversity today is the outcome of thousands of years of human interaction with nature and among people with different customs, beliefs, and ways of life" (Koichiro Matsuura, Director-General of UNESCO, 2004). Culture is a reflection of how people have been living. Therefore, respecting culture is equal to respecting human beings. In the global multicultural society of today, accepting differences is a keystone of co-existence in peace.

Having spent six months at UPEACE where students from 38 countries get together, I feel the importance of this golden rule of respecting differences. But, at the same time, I also feel the difficulty of this with my body (this is a Japanese expression meaning a real experience of your own, not a lesson from textbooks). For example, I often felt frustration with how things go slow here in Costa Rica. Believe or not, I waited for almost two months until internet access became available in my house! For me, it was an unbelievably slow process because getting internet only takes a few days in Japan, where I am from. Frustrated, I once asked the accommodation coordinator why it was taking so long. I still remember her answer, "Because this is Costa Rica, Yoko." I still remember the moment because her answer smashed my head (not literally, of course). Her answer made me realize that I was expecting the same level of services in Costa Rica as in my own country.

I noticed how difficult it is to go beyond a built-in expectation and how people automatically and unconsciously expect what they are used to. I even thought I was such a hypocrite for not being able to accept a small difference about the internet without frustration, although I was trying to advocate the importance of mutual understanding beyond differences.

I even thought: how could it be possible to respect differences in serious issues such as language, religion, and politics, when I couldn't even tolerate a small difference about the internet?

However, there was an incident in my class which gave me hope that we can go beyond differences. It was after a lecture by a visiting professor. He told the class that he was now ready to take questions. So, one of my Japanese classmates raised his hand. However, he could not make his question clear enough to be understood by the teacher, possibly because of nervousness, and because of a lack of English proficiency. Since I am also Japanese, I totally understood what he was trying to say (we share typical mistakes in English because our mistakes are often caused by our mother tongue), but the teacher could not. He said, "I am sorry, but you are losing me..." Ironically, it turned out to be the teacher who was losing the students! To help out my Japanese classmate, one of our classmates (an English native speaker) raised his hand and rephrased the Japanese student's question so that the teacher could understand. Still, the teacher didn't get it. Then, another student jumped in to explain it in a different way. I don't know why those students could understand what the Japanese student meant (maybe because we had spent enough time together by then to understand each other), but it was surely the moment we understood the real meaning of cooperation.

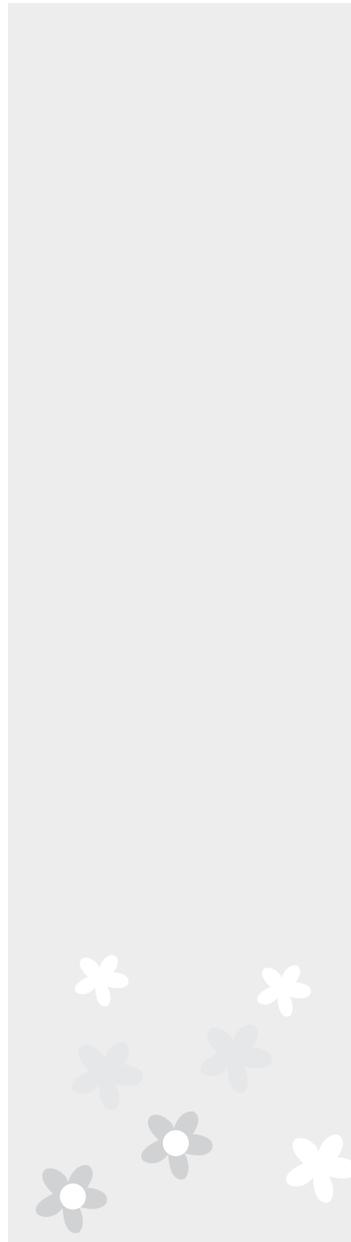
It was such a great moment to feel unity in the class. Those students who volunteered to help out the Japanese student showed such a splendid respect and care for differences. Yes, it might be true that the Japanese student's ability to make himself understood in English was not satisfactory (at least for the teacher), and he was not outspoken enough to pose a question in front of everybody without getting

nervous. However, such differences in language and attitudes towards public speaking (the Japanese often get shy) were not problems because there were people around who understood our differences and offered to help.

This incident not only gave me hope that we can go beyond serious differences like languages, but also emphasized the importance of cooperation. The Japanese student in this story may not be as good in English as native speakers, but he has thorough skills and knowledge about child education. Maybe when this topic is raised in class, it will be his turn to help other students. Obviously, nobody is perfect. People have their own strengths and weaknesses. That is why we need to compensate for each other. That is why we need to understand each other's differences.

Lastly, let me conclude with the lyrics of a Japanese song. Its title is *"One of a kind."* It became very popular in Japan several years ago. Like the message of this song, I truly believe that each of us is the only flower in the world. Each one is different, but the best in a different way. As I leave the campus of UPEACE, I wish for every flower which got together here to go into full bloom and to show the beauty of the world in the future.

Best wishes for everyone,
Yoko Fukushima



“ ONE OF A KIND ”

(SEKAI NI HITOTSU DAKE NO HANA)

「世界に一つだけの花」

Look at the flowers that stand in the shop
花屋の店先に並んだ

Each has a beauty that makes your heart stop
いろんな花を見ていた

We all have our favorites, but one thing is sure
人それぞれ好みはあるけど

Flowers will bloom with a beauty that's pure
どれもみんな綺麗だね

Which one among us is better than the rest?
この中で誰が一番だなんて

No competition, no need to contest
争うこともしないで

There in the buckets, the flowers stand tall
バケツの中 誇らしげに

Heads held in pride far above it all
しゃんと胸を張っている

Yet why do we people do what we do?
それなのに僕ら人間は

Always wanting to compare?
どうしてこうも比べたがる?

Fighting each other to get to the top?
一人ひとり違うのにその中で

When we all have a treasure so rare
一番になりたがる?

Why don't we get it?
そうさ僕らは

In this wide world you are one of a kind
世界に一つだけの花

Cherish your beauty, there's no need to hide it
一人ひとり違う種を持つ

Each of us holding a different seed
その花を咲かせることだけに

Just be yourself, that is all you need
一生懸命になればいい

Small flowers, big flowers, all kinds of flowers
小さい花や 大きな花

You'll never find any one that's the same
一つとして同じものはないから

No need to struggle to be number one
ナンバーワンにならなくてもいい

Just be yourself, be the ONLY ONE.
もともと特別なオンリーワン





Smilja Jankovic
Student, Bosnia

Smilja Jankovic is originally from Sarajevo, Bosnia. She is currently a student in the International Law and Human Rights program at UPEACE, and also fondly remembers her days of studying literature and film.

We met sometime ago at a friend's party, costumed and crazy, worshipping the full moon and dancing wildly to the hollow beat of the city - happy to be alive and loving every minute of it. It was one of those ad-hoc nights when people just happened to crawl out of their urban holes and release all those days of tension and stress into a single night of drugged out unity in mind, body and spirit. Clutching a whiskey glass in her right hand, Iza was standing by the door, not yet sure whether she had found the right address, but the black leotard and a pair of cat ears gave her away and prevented her from leaving the safe confines of the small downtown apartment building. Eventually the rhythms of Coltrane brought us closer together and we continued our 'party' missions for many, many more full moons to come.

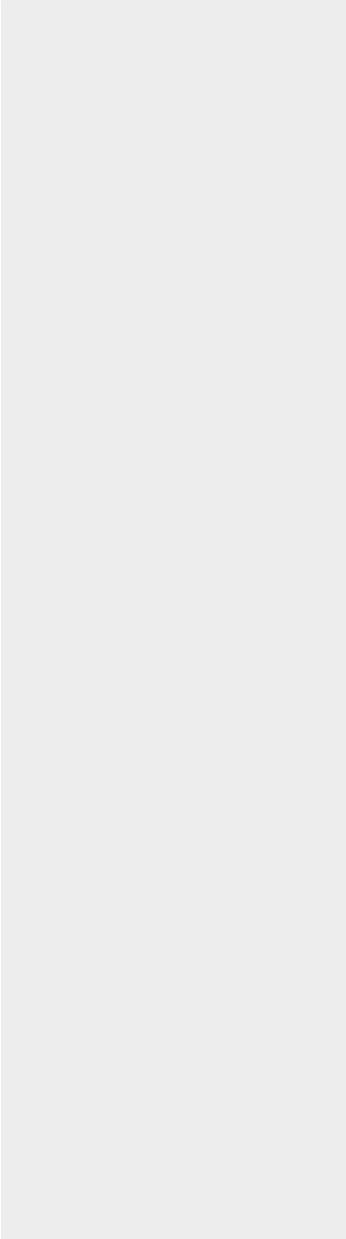
Iza and I have known each other for 17 years-13 years of solid fun and another 4 of agony, decay, and medicine cabinets overflowing with blue, red, yellow, green, and white tablets. If someone had told me then that I would be sitting here today writing this story, I would have been the one deciding to leave and saying a few quick good-byes to the people closest to the door, but no one did. We all drowned those boring voices of consciousness and caution and proceeded with our nights of total debauchery and complete freedom, always drinking from the fullest cup and having sex like there was no tomorrow. It must've been during one of those nights that Iza got sick, but no one knew that then either.

The day I received a phone call from my always cheery friend was the day I broke my great-great-grandmother's mirror. It gently slipped out of my hand and, with a force of 200 years, hit the floor of the big room, shattering into hundreds of pieces and falling under furniture that hasn't been moved for decades. Still on my knees and struggling to keep my cool, I

heard the phone from the grand foyer and Iza on the other line, whispering in a voice I could not recognize. She repeated a few confused phrases, asked some bizarre questions, paused every 10 seconds and, in the end, after about 10 minutes of this crazy monologue, her speech finally became normal and she screamed: "I have it. I freaking have it..." Then she stopped, took a deep breath, and hung up the phone.

IT, of course, was HIV and, by the time the doctors had found it in her body, the virus had already spread and contaminated every third or fourth cell of that fiery young blood. Soon afterwards, Iza started feeling the symptoms and I, for the first time, found myself thinking about karma and mystic traditions of the far East and the kingdoms of ancient secrets where all broken were fixed and all sickly healed. I couldn't watch her crawling on all fours, gasping for breath and begging for a little water because "the fire had consumed her body," and I especially couldn't bear the look of hopelessness in her eyes even after 10 liters of icy-cold liquid simply could not fight the fever burning inside. I could not listen to those violent outbursts of coughing that made her growl like a jungle animal, hidden in a dark corner of the room with blankets and sheets that still could not keep her from shaking. I could not be a witness to the arrival of death in the house where once life had reigned supreme, but I had to and I did.

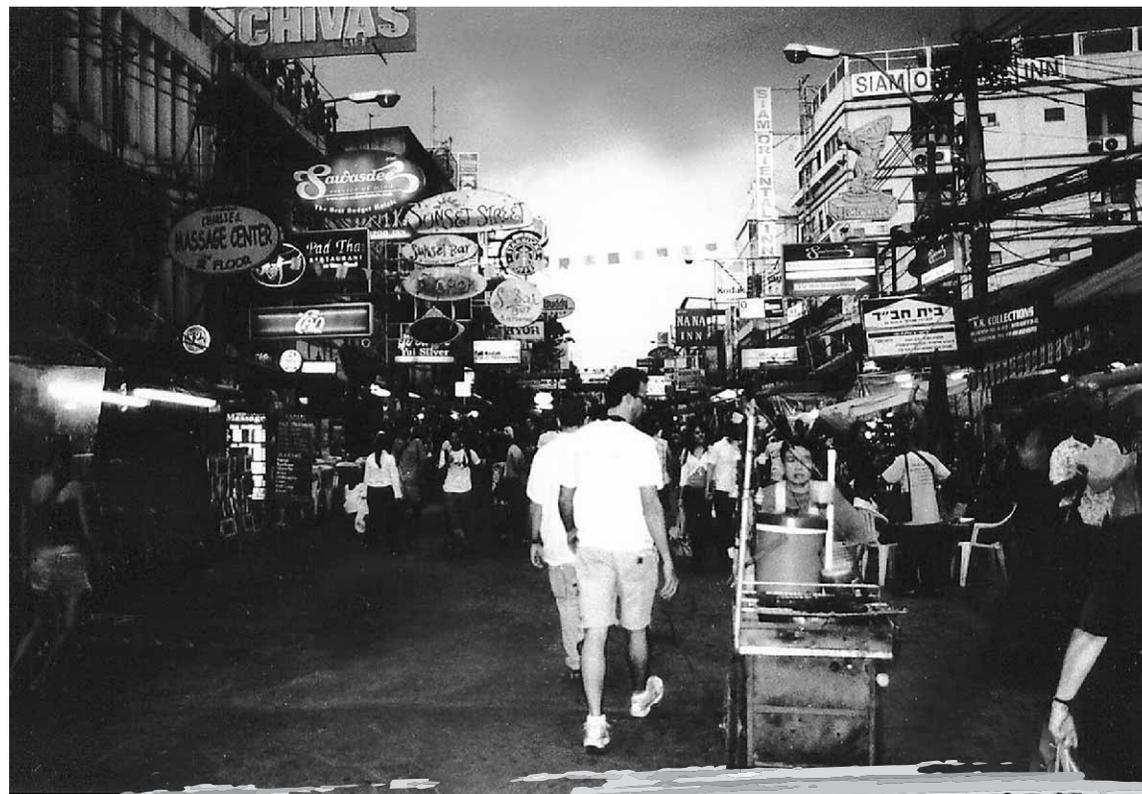
I stayed with my friend through all those months of suffering and pain and, together with her, I finally lost faith in the human race, in their goodness and compassion. Every door that once welcomed Iza in all her energy and high spirits, now slammed shut in her face; every hand that once invited her to dance, now pointed menacingly towards the exit sign; every mouth that once kissed those full lips, now whispered behind her back words of disgust and fear. In the end, these were the hardest moments, but neither I nor any doctor



could have given her anything to heal those wounds. The party girl - the loudest, the wildest, the most beautiful and alive, was dying the worst kind of death and no music had stayed behind to play her death march.

Finally, I could tell you about Iza's departure from this world, but it was completely ordinary and abandoned and nothing like her life of many friends and crazy gatherings. I still remember the moment when our eyes first met. From the other side of the room, she had the air of force and serenity that gave her an otherworldly glow and made her seem as though she were standing tall above, seeing and touching heights unreachable to the rest of us. Lou Reed was screeching in the background and every body in the room swayed to that beat, individual and united like never before. But Iza stood aside, as if she knew, and looking straight at me, she quietly mouthed the words of a poem left behind: "Please stop and think before you make that final mistake, please stop and don't end up with AIDS."

Mauricio Mireles



Remember

A Story with Musical and Audio Interpretation

**Karim El Mantawi,
Paul Klassen,
Jessica Moe,
and
Keiko Sasaki**

AUDIO - Buddhist Chant

...

"Thousands of Buddhist monks are leading massive protests through the streets of Yangon, Myanmar's biggest city. They carry no weapons and wear only their saffron- and maroon-colored robes, but their most powerful weapon is the reverence in which they are held throughout the country.

Their heads are shaven and they march barefoot and silent. The city of Yangon (formerly Rangoon) seems to be dominated by the Buddhist monks these days. They have been marching repeatedly through the streets for a week - and their marches are getting bigger by the day." (The Barefoot Art of War, Salon.com)

...

Growing up in Yangon, my mother would walk me to the Buddhist monastery for my weekly lessons. The winding streets that lead to the monastery were lined with stray dogs and beggars. At the monastery, I learned a great deal from the monks, who are like sons of Buddha to the Burmese. At the beginning of my experience with the monks, I had no compassion for what I saw in the streets of my city. But as time passed, I developed a new understanding of my human connection to those I had previously ignored. There, I learned to recite by heart Buddha's wise words of peace:

*All Tremble at the rod,
All are fearful of death.
Drawing the parallel to yourself,
Neither kill nor get others to kill.*

*All Tremble at the rod,
All hold their life dear.
Drawing the parallel to yourself,
Neither kill nor get others to kill.*

*Whoever takes a rod
To harm living beings desiring ease,
When he himself is looking for ease,
Will meet with no ease after death.*

*Whoever doesn't take a rod
To harm living beings desiring ease,
When he himself is looking for ease,
Will meet with ease after death.
(Dhammapada 129-134)*

Although I would have liked to have stayed with the monks, I couldn't bear to see my mother struggle to feed my younger brothers and sisters. Thus, the path I chose to take would wander away from the teachings of our beloved Buddha.

After failing to secure a decent income, I realized that if I were to become a soldier with the ruling military I would be guaranteed some financial security for my family. Suddenly, I found my reality to be that of military drills and obedience to the orders that the generals shouted at us. Although obedience was taught by both the monks and the generals, they were two worlds apart. The monks had always taught that non-violence was the means to change whereas the generals were espousing that strength and respect was earned with force. My allegiance was now to those that served the 'junta'.

...

AUDIO (Al Jazeera):

"Openly, in a huge show of defiance, Myanmar's monks took to the streets again, determined to challenge the military dictatorship. With Buddhist flags raised, they marched through the Yangon, chanting religious mantras and calling for peace. Always at the head, the monks. The men in maroon become the biggest challenge to the generals in nearly 20 years."

...

Suddenly I found myself transported in the troop truck to the streets that I had walked as a child. On the front lines, I came face to face with those I had revered.

...

AUDIO (Al Jazeera):

"Then they fired tear gas. Police reinforcements came in, but defiantly the monks and their followers edged forward in the face of the guns and continued their direct challenge. There is huge uncertainty about what will happen here. Whether this will become a defining moment, a turning point in Myanmar's future, or another bout of state-sponsored killing and brutality, is in the hands of the generals, or more accurately, the young soldiers who are now pointing their guns at their countrymen."

...

*Drawing the parallel to yourself,
Neither kill nor get others to kill.
Drawing the parallel to yourself,
Neither kill nor get others to kill.*

...

AUDIO - Buddhist Chant



Ian Mathieson
Student, Canada

Ian Mathieson is a current graduate student at the University for Peace.

His undergraduate degree in Anthropology and Religious Studies was obtained at The University of Alberta, Canada.

He has also studied in Cortona, Italy and Lancaster University in the United Kingdom.

His work experience includes Amnesty International Canada and community work in Edmonton, Alberta, among other places.

Ian's current research entails the correlation between the Canadian political constellation and peace-keeping trends.

What can you call community? Perhaps there is nothing more contradictory. Community is something so very personal and subjective yet so reliant on other people to make it happen. So often manicured and crafted by our institutions and media but only true when experienced as someone who has "actually lived there." When you're from anywhere there is a stereotype of how it should be; this is what I will start with. My goal however will be to point you, my kind reader, towards a sense of what that subjective idea of community has come to be in my world, as a person from Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

"Through multiculturalism, Canada recognizes the potential of all Canadians, encouraging them to integrate into their society and take an active part in its social, cultural, economic and political affairs." - Government of Canada Website

When you grow up in Canada and you go to school, you are always taught a few things without fail, things that become increasingly difficult to forget as they are pounded into your brain as you march through the grades of public education. The first of these facts is that Canada is a multicultural place; that where you live is a mix of people happily co-existing and living their own cultural way. The second is that our neighbours to the south live in what is considered to be a 'melting pot'. The contrast is clear: On one hand you have the image of thousands of people being stirred about in a giant hot cauldron until there is nothing left but some unrecognizable soup of humanity, bland and tasteless but un-offensive. On the other are images of quilts, mosaics and interwoven patchworks where harmony reins supreme and everyone lives appreciating each other's uniqueness.

"Don't blame the Canadians..." ,from the song *North American Scum*, The band LCD Soundsystem

These two perspectives encapsulate two important aspects of my movement through the Canadian education system.

The first aspect, and one that everyone learns rather quickly, is the fact that no matter what happens in Canada, it will always be compared to the U.S., usually in a passive-aggressive manner similar to the melting pot / mosaic metaphor. The second aspect is that while generally the Canadian public educational system is a good thing, much of what they are telling you is bullshit. And the first time you go to the U.S. and see just how multicultural much of it is, this fact becomes clear.

"City of Champions" -Slogan you see driving into the City of Edmonton

So if we can't rely on our educational systems to tell us what culture and community is, what do we do then? For me, I didn't grasp my surroundings and what they meant until a few things happened. One was leaving the warm and comforting haven of my family home. The other was my experience of having left and then living abroad, where I met many people who wanted to know what Canada was all about. I would have to explain, much to the disappointment of my 4th grade teacher Ms. Mazzolini, how many of us actually lived in contrast to the many assumptions of everyone else in the world. It was hard to describe a place that was so big in a few words. It was also difficult to really find anything that encapsulated what Canada, or even more specifically Edmonton, was like overall, besides what they already knew - the winter is cold...

"Yo... yo, it's corrupt where I'm from... Edmonton!" -from the song *Oliver Square*, Cadence Weapon, local rapper

But with these exchanges and more time away from 'home', at a distance, Canada became clearer to me. It ceased to be what I had been told it was for so many years and slowly formed into a place that I could describe beyond the textbooks from grade school that had titles like: "Canada, A Cultural Mosaic." In other words, I had a sense of a place

that I refer to as home and then could describe what made it seem like home to me. This notion of what home is often changes based upon my perspectives, but I know now that one place solidly resonates as that 'home' we so often speak of, and that now I'm stuck with it, for better or worse. We truly can never, as the saying goes, escape our roots, no matter how far we wander. We can also not return as the same person, having left home for any amount of time. Platitudes perhaps, but for me a very strong part of what makes up the Canadian psyche, if we have one at all.

"The Guess Who suck, the Jets were lousy anyway, the same route everyday..." -from the song *One Great City*, Winnipeg band, Weakerthans

"The city you live in is ugly..." -from the song of the same name, Vancouver band, Young and Sexy

We often do return to these 'hometowns' and if I think about it carefully, Canada for me has become a land of leaving, coming and returning, a place where people really develop a schizophrenic relationship with their roots from which they try to break free but cannot ever completely disentangle themselves. My community, my home, had insidiously and secretively infiltrated my identity, yet I have always had a desperate need to escape from it. Once free, I reminisced with equal desperation and nostalgia. Only when set to return would I begin to remember the endless black winters, depressingly monotone and sprawling suburbs, and the reserved and predictable existence of safe nine-to-five familiarity, of day in, day out.

"Across the shaky airport table café... you say my eyes are emblems of going away, f@#\$ me... Why does it have to be this way...?" -from the song *Cinnamon Hearts* by Edmonton / Vancouver songwriter Christian Hansen

When you speak to people where I'm from, they often have a similar sensation of the 'hometown', that at one time they were desperate to leave. And that they left, that someone had to leave them, that someday they will return, that they will never go back, that if they could they would leave here for somewhere else. We come from the town of Pincher

Creek to go to school in Edmonton, from the East coast to the prairies for work, from off the reserve into the city, from Poland, from India for that 'better life'. We come from the Suburbs to be in the centre of the city, we leave the lonely apartments of downtown to have a family in the lonelier cookie cutter homes of the suburbs, from the panicked streets of Toronto to the quiet lakes of northern Ontario.

"On the back of a cartoon coaster in the blue of a TV screen light, I drew a map of Canada... Oh Canada... with your face sketched on it twice..." -from the song *A Case of You* by Joni Mitchell

Rarely in my community do I meet someone like myself who says that they have lived in Edmonton or any one place for 25 years; I'm now 27. But they can tell you where home is, where they have a community, and they came to understand this in many different ways. In our short lives, we all have these places, these communities, these 'hometowns' that grew inside us, that we cannot extract from ourselves no matter how much we would like to sometimes. My community is full of people from somewhere else, perhaps not a mosaic but certainly a place that is constantly shifting, just as my perception of it does every time I leave and inevitably return.

When the winter rains come pouring down on that new home of mine, will you think of me and wonder if I'm fine?

Will your restless heart come back to mine on a journey to through the past?

Will I still be in your in eyes and on your mind?

- from the song *Journey through the Past* by Neil Young

Special recognition must go to CBC radio 3 Podcast with Grant Lawrence: "*Home for the Holidays: The Hometown Song Special*" for inspiration musically and otherwise.

India-Pakistan Dialogue



Usman Khan
Student, Pakistan



Varghese Theckanath s.g.
Student, India

(transcribed by Lisa Jokivirta)

Usman Khan, from Pakistan, is a Peace Education student at UPEACE. Before coming to Costa Rica, he was living in Pakistan and completed his Master's in Anthropology at Quaid-i-Azam University Islamabad. Usman has worked for several development organizations in various capacities.

Every once in a while, we come across moments within our UPEACE community when borders are crossed and genuine connections made. I met up with two friends, Usman and Varghese, from Pakistan and India respectively, for an evening of drinks, dining, and, indeed, discussion and debate.

On Meetings

(L)isa: So.... how and when did you two first meet?

(U)sman: [laughing] Well, upon arriving at UPEACE, I remember feeling a little bit overwhelmed at first. Meeting Varghese was like looking into a mirror - it was like finding a familiar face.

(V)arghese: Yes, I remember I first met Usman in the Foundation course. At the beginning, I was slightly cautious. Not because I have any problems with Pakistanis, personally, but because you never know if the reverse might be true.

(U): It was an interesting start! Our course was on peace and conflict. But Varghese and I couldn't exactly discuss in a direct way. Whatever we should talk about, will be in conflict. My examples will always come from Pakistan, his will always come from India, and of course, this will always lead to contradictions, no?

(V): [laughing] I suppose it could!

(U): Although, I do remember when I first got accepted to UPEACE. I asked if there would be any Pakistani students, and found out there wouldn't. Next, I asked how many Indian students would be attending. I knew that we have many things in common, and knew that we might be able to somehow relate.

(L): In your countries, would this sort of a friendship be possible?

(V): Hardly! It is very difficult to obtain papers to cross the border between the two countries. For a Pakistani to come to India, it is very difficult. And I believe the reverse is also true.

(U): He's right. There are many barriers to visiting India and, even then, access is often restricted to specific areas. That's why, in terms of making Indian friends, this man right here [pointing to Varghese] would definitely be my first.

(V): Same here. Usman is my first glimpse into a Pakistani mind...

[Everyone laughs]

On the 'External Hand'

(L): You both talked about borders and barriers. How do you think these are being constructed, even in everyday life?

(U): You see, as soon as you start schooling, you start reading against India. You automatically begin to develop some negative feelings towards it.

(V): Oh, see now, I don't know if this is quite true. At least, I have not come across any anti-Pakistan or, for that matter, anti-Muslim curriculum in India's school system. You see, in India, we have more than 180 million Muslims - the second largest Muslim population after Indonesia. Such curriculum will not generally be tolerated. Some fundamentalist groups would love to have such things included though...

Varghese Theckanath, from India, is a student of International Law and Human Rights at UPEACE.

Prior to his UPEACE days, he was a community development and human rights activist for many years in Hyderabad, India.

He founded two community-based NGOs: the People's Initiative Network for educating children in slums, and the Campaign for Housing and Tenure Rights

for the protection of the housing rights of the urban poor.

He is a member of the Montfort Brothers of St. Gabriel, a Church-based NGO working in India for education, development, and human rights for over a hundred years.

(U): And yet, we are not allowed in. Pakistanis have great difficulties visiting India. First, they apply for the visa. Then, they must go to the police station to report upon their arrival...

(V): Yes, well, there is something quite wrong with this... I remember how some Pakistani delegates had trouble visiting some places when attending an international conference back home. We had people from all over - China, Brazil, Europe, Russia... They could go anywhere they wanted. But those from Pakistan could visit only very restricted locations. At first, the Pakistanis were very upset over this and even wanted to leave the conference. But, then, some persuasive friends finally managed to get this issue somehow sorted...

(U): Well, all I can say is that it would all seem to come down to a lack of personal, one-on-one contact, which as we know only breeds ignorance. For example, my only real knowledge about India has come from Indian movies, and since arriving at UPEACE - from interactions with Roshni, Varghese, Harsh...

(V): Yes, too little person-to-person communication and too much mass communication! Politicians on either sides of the border don't make things any easy either. Let's take the case of Mrs. Indira Gandhi, for example. She was in power for almost fourteen years, until 1984. Whenever there were problems in the country, she would put the blame on an 'external hand'. This always meant Pakistan. Such notions coming from influential politicians tend to gain popularity over time. We used to joke about it. Gratefully, we seem to have made progress. Now, no-one speaks about the external hand. You simply don't hear it. I guess that it all comes down to small steps from those in power, from the mass media, from ordinary citizens..., isn't it?

On Crossing Borders

(U): Yes, because progress is actually being made. Perceptions are changing, becoming re-defined. Student exchange

programs and Indo-Pakistani cooperative initiatives are on the rise. Every Indian who visits Pakistan is most pleased. We have come a long, long way.

(V): You're right - it's about human-to-human contact. Governments are in dialogue on substantive issues. Trade is increasing. There are more people from India going to Pakistan, and vice versa. There are many who have relatives in India, and there is some level of communication between them. Also, like Usman said, there are a lot of people-to-people efforts and alliances being created. For example, I once proposed creating a South Asian network for an organization that I was a part of. One of the main reasons, though, I confess, was to be able to visit Pakistan! There are many like me in India who would like to visit Pakistan...

(U): How convenient! Shall we tell the funders? [chuckling]

(V): Yes, well, it is now taking shape, although I never got to go.

(U): And let us not forget the issue of good leadership. Actually, India had some very prominent politicians like Nehru and Sardar Patel for a longer period than Pakistan. I think this has helped shape India into what it is today - in democratic transition - at least a partial one. And, for sure let us not forget the Railway Minister of India, Lalu Prasad Yadav, for example... He is a true Indian sample... He was such a hit on his visit to Pakistan...Oh, I like this guy - very straightforward and humorous ... He has such an open mind... Oh, and always brushing his ear hair, too, such rustic humour...

(V): [laughing] Yeh! He's very humanist. Interestingly, he is not concerned about his security, and yeh, also doesn't give much thought to brushing his ear hair in front of the public or media.... He is only concerned with daring to take steps forward. He comes from Bharath, as he himself says. Bharat is a Sanskrit name for India and India is only the anglicized

form created by the elite. Actually, these are two different worlds. The earlier term is linked with tradition and culture and later with modernity. He comes from the milkmen's caste, but has remained very humble and down-to-earth. He is definitely a favorite politician among both Pakistanis and Indians...

(U): And, the most important issue of all: cricket! In Pakistan, the Indian team is in fact very popular. When India and Pakistan are playing, of course we want our own team to win. But, if we are not playing, we might as well let the Indians claim victory. They are always our first second choice!

(V): This is true! But, even when it's India versus Pakistan, loyalties are not always that clear. In Hyderabad, where I am from, when Pakistan beats India, you will hear fireworks in the city. This, of course, builds some tension - where do your loyalties stand?

(U): Or, more importantly, where do our orders stand? It's about time to get this night underway - shall we order drinks, anyone?

(V): My loyalty is entirely yours, my friend!

[Everyone laughs. And drinks start coming our way.]



Sandra Macharia
Student, Kenya

Sandra Macharia is a journalist and communications specialist. She has served as Communications Officer for UNDP Somalia, gaining experience in crisis and post-conflict contexts. Sandra earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in Journalism from the University of Cardiff, Wales.

Since the disputed election in Kenya on 27 December 2007, more than one thousand of my fellow Kenyans have met a violent death and hundreds of thousands have been displaced. Life, as we have known it, has changed forever.

What began as a reaction to a deeply flawed electoral process has morphed into an ugly spiral of vengeful killing regarding genuine and perceived marginalization over land and other resources. But, the purpose of this writing is not to examine the politics, the posturing, the lack of sensibility, vision and leadership, nor the vacuum of credible institutions through which to address grievance.

Rather, I have been forced to scrutinize my own role in this debacle. What would I have done differently, really, if I were any of the protagonists - power-hungry, land-starved or denied access to justice? I cannot know as I sit, ironically, in Costa Rica, bastion of peace. Perhaps I would have done exactly the same thing that thousands have done - sent an email or a text message ridiculing one tribe or another. Jokingly, of course. On the other hand, perhaps I would have read the gathering storm clouds with clarity, and raised the alarm far and wide. For, in the end, nobody wins when people's lives are lost and seeds of hate sown. But, that is all in my mind. I am appalled, disappointed, and frustrated as I read and watch the news reports daily, as yet more people die for supposed leaders who do not even know their names. But, a journey must start with one step. An action.

And, that must be a commitment: tribalism stops with me.

I want the youth in my country to stand up and say, unanimously, that tribalism stops with us and we shall not be slaves to it any longer. Old and young people who believe

that we are so much more than this inane label - that we are women and men of integrity, compassion, and faith. I want us to teach our children, and our children's children that this thing called 'tribe' is neither a currency nor an investment. Neither a shield nor a weapon.

To bring our beautiful country through this fire, we must make sure that everybody counts. That every Kenyan can feed and educate their child. That we have hope for the future. That we have a stake in this land. If this were already so, we would not be burning down our homes, our churches with people in them, or our economy. We would not be killing our neighbours with guns, machetes and poisoned arrows. We would not be raping our girls and women.

I stand up now and swear before God and before my country, that tribalism stops with me. Everybody, *everybody* counts.

III. Rituals



Paagina blanca

A hui hou kakou (until we meet again)



Flo Vineberg
Student, Canada

Flo Vineberg grew up in downtown Toronto, CANADA (eh?!), and attended Cornell University where she received a B.Sc. in Industrial and Labour Relations, with a concentration in African studies. Upon graduation in May 2006, she moved to Hawaii where she lived for just over a year, spending her time working at a small, private family law firm, and traveling around learning about Hawaiian language, culture, spirituality, community and artistic expression. She found a magical connection in the closeness of the artisan and musician communities in Hawaii, which provided her with the support, encouragement and dynamic perspective necessary to laugh more at life, to take herself less seriously, and to learn how to effectively express herself through written and spoken word, singing and musicianship. The islands are rich and mystical, and awaken in almost all who go a sense of

Come and sit with me beneath the Kumi Nui
And I will tell you a story of this Nani Moku.
Listen Closely to the Kai, Moana with all its secrets, and
let the sun heal your body, for you are home.
We are your O'hana now; hear the keiki playing as waves wash upon your feet.
This is our land, Kama Aina. The land our ancestors
preserved and fought for,
the land that gave birth to taro fields, to Pele -great Hawaiian goddess, defender
of the volcanoes,
to the great Kalalau's looming majestic along shimmering horizons.
Welcome home.
You may breathe easier now, for life here is simple.
We live by Aloha in spirit and in practice; we come with leis, with instruments, with warmth,
and with the rich history and culture preserved for us along paths of both hardship and success.
We are your Hanei family now, and we welcome you to sit with us at our table,
to eat poi and lomi lomi,
to travel from windward to leeward side on the wings of the great Pacific...
and to fall silent as the illustrious day gives way to starry night.
Welcome to your community. Let us celebrate the Hanau of new days, rejuvenated spirit,
Let there be a Ho'olaule for the rhythms we have found together.
We embrace you, we give you life
as the sun rises in the Ai and sets in the Komohana...

Welcome.

*spiritual and historical connection
unique to this place;
Flo plans on returning to Hawaii as
soon as possible to pursue Hawaiian
language classes, to rejoin
her community, and to continue
to perform and grow as both
a person and an artist.*



Golda Keng

Student, Cameroon

Born and raised in Cameroon, Golda Keng is pursuing her Master's degree in Peace Education at the UN-mandated University for Peace, with emphasis in the fields of Media, Human Rights, Conflict Resolution, Gender, and Environmental education. As an educator, Golda has worked in her native Cameroon, China, South Korea, and currently volunteers at the United World College in Costa Rica.

In the land of my fathers, a "knock-door" ceremony

Dry season mornings are usually frosty in my hometown, Nyen, in the Northwest province of Cameroon. On this December morning in 2003, I awaken to the sounds, sights, smells, and feel of my homeland. I stretch and take a peek outside, my senses begin to kick into gear. My teeth chatter as I hear the whispery breeze squeeze through the shut window onto my face. I turn over, yawning, to look at the fireplace in the middle of the room, wondering why the warmth has disappeared. I try to go back to sleep but the happy chatter outside reminds me what day this is. I can hear my granny "Abot" talking, no, questioning in the way that is natural for morning greetings.

"Are you fine?"

"Did you sleep well?"

I have come to accept this morning routine. At least twenty more inquiries to every grandchild, child, and cousin of hers will be posed. Greetings are not mere platitudes here. She really wants to know how you slept, and will drill you more than your city doctor will. I generally make up stories about a dream in which I had eight babies and that genuinely brightens her entire day. She is undoubtedly the family matriarch and everyone looks up to her.

My 'home' cousins have already fetched water and firewood and I can smell the fires from the numerous huts. Those of us from the city, whom everyone calls 'city' cousins, are still dealing with the transition of waking up before the sunrise, much to the chagrin of the rest of the family here.

Today is a special day. It is the "knock-door" (traditional introductory marriage ceremony) of my older sister, Sheryl. There are two others: the blessings, and the handing-over ceremonies. We are at my paternal grandparents and have to get ready to welcome the family of my sister's fiancé before midday. A huge quantity of food is being prepared. We are a

people who value food and never waste it, so everything will be eaten and each person will leave with a package, as is customary. "Tiwar" women dancers, mostly cohorts of my granny, will show up soon and start to heat things up a little. But for now, some kind of Rap music is blaring from a radio my favorite cousin Awah has just brought out. Abot thinks it's sacrilegious to listen to stuff like that, especially on a day like this. It's a good thing she does not know that I listen to Rap too. To her, I am a 'normal' child.

Sheryl is nowhere in sight. Not even Mom knows where Granny has stuck her. This is the beginning of the happy exercise of 'finding the girl' that will take place when Dan (my future brother-in-law) and his family arrive. Everyone knows Granny did the hiding, but she will never admit that she did. We all join in the food preparation and cleaning of the large yard. I love this part, where everyone works together. We rarely do that in the city.

It is 10:30 a.m. and the tempo has quickened. Granny is now in her element. She yells for everyone to shower and show up in the traditional colorful dress. My dad has taken his seat at the central ancestral chair in the middle of the podium, the seat to his left reserved for Granny, and the one to his right, for Dan's dad. Every sitting arrangement is symbolic. In front of Dad is the symbolic family drinking 'horn' that was used by my deceased grandfather and his male ancestors, and will be passed down to the next generations of males.

As I finish dressing up, I hear my six-year-old cousin yelling and clapping: "They are coming, they are coming...!" All the uncles, male cousins, and married women go out front to welcome the visitors, while the unmarried females, myself included, stay in the back waiting for the fun part. We all have our ears plastered to the wall, straining to hear the talk. After

about 30 minutes during which all of the salutations and introductions are in order, my granduncle, feigning innocence, speaks up: "We are honored to have you in our midst, but we are still unaware of the nature and purpose of your visit.

"Yeah, right!"

"Well-spoken." I hear Dan's dad say.

"The Timah family is here because we respect your family and need you at this time..."

The talk goes on for sometime. The summary of it is that they are interested in one of the daughters of my family. We all know this. But tradition says we have to play the roles. Dan's family is then asked if they are willing to pay the price of finding the woman they seek, and of course, they are. A 'gift' basket is placed in the center of the room. My granny comes into the room and takes us out, one after the other, and presents us to the guests.

"This one?" Of course, there is a smile and a "no" answer followed by a drop of cash onto the basket for the next girl. I am glad when it comes to my turn, since leaning against the wall for an hour has taken its toll on my feet. As I sit down, I signal Dan and mouth, "Am sorry" since unfortunately, we are a family of girls. After all of the presentations, Granny finally brings out Sheryl, and there is a burst of elation as everyone screams a 'yes' answer, followed by a fanciful drum roll, clapping, and gongs going off. She looks so radiant in her beautiful dress and mesmerizing smile.

When all quiets down, Dad takes the stage and addresses the family and the 'guests', expressing his happiness that such a family would seek his daughter... Finally he has to carry out the rites. Granny hands over the 'horn' and someone fills it with traditional palm wine. After blessing the 'gods' by pouring some on the ground, he signals to Sheryl saying: "My daughter, it is because of you that we have these strangers among us today. We don't know them, but we have to begin to know them. You have decided they are good enough for us to unite with them, and so I ask you to show everyone in this family that we can eat with them, drink with them, stand

with them, and fall with them. If this is what you want our family to do, then I shall let you and these people drink from my cup."

As he says this, Dad takes a drink from the horn and gives it to Sheryl, who goes on her knees to receive it. She looks around at everyone and then drinks from the cup. There is utter silence as she moves over to where Dan is sitting, goes down on her knees and hands him the horn. With a smile of relief, Dan takes a sip and in turn hands it to his father. After his father drinks it all up and shows the crowd the empty horn, there is another burst of pandemonium. The Tiwar women come forward to perform the marriage dance and we all clap and watch. Later, food is served in a very formal way, starting with the fathers, Dan and Sheryl, then Dan's family members and last, my family members. Eating and dancing continues into the night when a huge bonfire is lit. Dan and his family go back to their family house to prepare for my family's visit the next day, where the final blessings and handing-over ceremony will take place.

I look around for my sister and go to give her a bear hug. She cannot stop crying. We move to the side and there, we see Mom, hugging my dad in a corner. Now there's a sight! It is probably the second time I have seen my parents hug each other in public! Sheryl and I start laughing.

"Maybe you should think about getting married too." She says. "Yikes!" we squeal in unison. She and I do this all the time. We know she is genuinely happy. Dan has been a classmate since forever. I am glad. We stand in silence hearing others sing: "Aye ha'a ni nwei na'a na, eh." (It is the joy that God has given us)

P.S: The 'horn ceremony' is very symbolic, and my favorite ceremony. It unites the two families. Divorces are not an option; as my people say, "you never spit out the wine." For this reason, many adults nowadays choose to skip this part of the marriage ceremony. The wine sharing establishes the unbreakable cord that has united the two families, since marriages here are a family affair.

Earthquake

Smilja Jankovic,
Nicole Oliveira,
and
Karim El Mantawi



1. *Beliefs* - In the town of Tombua, on the Atlantic coast of Angola, there lived three good people by the names of Smilja, Nicole and Karim. These three were neighbors, divided not only by the walls of their building, but also by their beliefs, for Karim followed Santeria, Nicole practiced Candomble and Smilja was a Zoroastrian. Each practiced their faith separately, ignorant of the other and rejecting their ways. They lived and prayed in solitude, barely exchanging a smile or uttering a simple greeting.

2. *Collapse* - This was the way of the three neighbors of the building. Their story, their beliefs, their disconnected and separated lives changed little until the great shudder of Tombua. The monstrous quake shook their walls and, with them, the three solitude lives that unfolded beyond them. The building tumbled to the ground where once only earth had lived.⁴

3. *Here* - With the collapse of their homes, the walls that had long separated the three good people were no more. Their lives reconciled by their common fortune, three homes were one.

4. *There* - Having never before shared a loaf of bread, the three good people were destined to eat with each other, all the while learning of the ways of the neighbor.

5. *Belief* - With time, the neighbors knew and understood enough to see. The former barriers that were their beliefs served now as a reason to rejoice, and with the first light of the third week after the great shudder, they began their ceremonies together.



³Jason Skinner. Oil Rig Worship at Sunrise. 2007.

Available at: <http://www.flickr.com/jasonskinner/>

⁴Anonymous. Building Crashing. 2007.

Available at: http://www.mce.k12tn.net/disasters/assignments_earthquake.htm

Interconnectedness of My Life Spaces: A Female Mienh Peace Education Perspective



Naita Saechao
Student, United States

Naita Saechao is mostly from Northern California. She is a first generation immigrant to the U.S. from Laos via Thailand, product of the so-called "Secret War." She is currently a student in the Peace Education M.A. program at UPEACE. The many places she has lived include: a refugee camp in Thailand, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Sacramento, the Marshall Islands, and now Costa Rica central. She is interested in exploring language policies, language shift, the many links between language and culture, and multi-lingual education systems.

As I reflect on my journeys, experiences and moments in this lifetime, in my world community, I begin to recognize all the energies that must have been re-directed to create this passageway for the destined meeting of the UPEACE community with my life spaces-personally, professionally, and socially. It is a belief of indigenous people that we all start out as one seed where every particle of our bodies comes from the union of the bounty of Mother Earth, the sun, and spirit.⁵ With this understanding, sustainable living is necessary for the survival of humanity. None of my life spaces would exist if it were not for the great gifts of the Earth providing us with life and existence. The Mienh people believe that without any true connection with the Earth, we will not have any true connection with the spirit world. This is of utmost importance to many indigenous groups all over the world because it forces us to be accountable and responsible for our past, present, and futures. The practices within the Peace Education community are most purposeful because they attempt to encompass the wisdom of all people throughout our generations, challenging us to remember that "biology does not condemn humanity to war"⁶. Through my Peace Education experiences, I've gained valuable insights about myself and my interconnections with the world in which I live, the people with whom I have relations, and the karmic energies of all other things of this universe which I affect. These insights provide me with lessons of awareness and mindfulness that encompass my daily praxis of educating for peace.

The holistic and ecological aspects of the Peace Education community truly embody the spirit of the Lu-Mienh hill tribe

people of whom I am a daughter. The Mienh people highly value communal living and the relations that we have with the land, our ancestors, and the spirit world. Peace Education integrates this perspective beautifully through the six strands or "petals of the flower"- educating for dismantling a culture of war, educating for living with justice and compassion, educating for promoting human rights and responsibilities, educating for building cultural respect, reconciliation and solidarity, educating for living in harmony with the earth, and finally, educating for cultivating inner peace.⁷ Within each strand, I find examples of my life experiences that have contributed to developing my identity, consciousness and understanding of the world, as well as applications toward building a culture of peace.

In the Mienh language and culture, ancestral ties and histories reflect all that is important for the inheritance of the Mienh traditions. It is deeply understood knowledge as a Mienh person that I cannot claim to be Mienh unless I feel the inherited burdens and hardships of my ancestors. These ancestral ties allow us to look into our past and to carry that burden onto future generations to pass on the legacies, responsibilities, and traditions of our people. Oral traditions have created stories that reflect the beginning of the lineage of the Mienh. The story follows that we are descendants of a princess and a dog. The sons and daughters of the princess and the dog formed the twelve clans of the Mienh people. I am of the Chao clan. With that, I am able to trace back my roots to one of the sons of the princess and the dog. My lineage is of the ancestors who had migrated into the mountains of Laos; hence the more widely accepted term

⁵Eagle Man, McGaa, E. *Mother Earth spirituality*. San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1999.

⁶Adams, David (ed). *The Seville statement on violence*. Paris: UNESCO, 1989.

⁷Toh, Swee-Hin. *Pathways to Building a Culture of Peace*. Presented at Peace Education Workshop in Uganda, July 10 -13, organized by the Ugandan National Commission for UNESCO and the Korean National Commission for UNESCO (2007).

"hill tribe." There in the mountains, the Mienh resorted to slash and burn farming as a means of agricultural production for the sole purpose of subsistence. This practice went against the Mienh beliefs about our relations to the land. They found that it harmed their relationships with their ancestors as well. Because of this, a religious ceremonial tradition had to be performed every time the land was ripe for harvest to get permission from the spirits of the land and our ancestors. The Mienh had to adapt their ways and values to survive in the new land they inhabited, reflecting community's ability to transform itself.

My parents' generation grew up in Laos during times of conflict and oppression. They have shared with me stories of abuse and hardships that have stayed with them to this day, to ensure the passage of histories, values, and traditions to my siblings and me. Through the Mienh people's historical legacy of militarization and marginalization, I've inherited and learned of the burdens and responsibilities that accompany my right to identify myself as Mienh. With this information, I have the opportunity to see that there is survival and beauty in living simply, whether it is for subsistence or to create a culture of peace with the environment. This embodies the Mienh beliefs and gives me a sense of connection with the land and the spirit world. This knowledge of past struggles also allows me to see the potential for change in a society with the habit of perpetuating a culture of war.

I find it interesting that in America, I am not considered American. I am viewed as an "other." People always ask me, "What are you?" or "what's your background?" I never really figured out how to answer these questions. As an adolescent, I found it most difficult to claim myself as Mienh. It was always difficult to explain what being Mienh was. There was no nation that we were a part of. Do I tell them where I was born or where my parents came from? Because of those moments of personal identity conflicts, I've seen the necessity of realizing one's community identity, history, struggles, experiences, and futures.

Those moments push me towards also realizing the ideology of one world and one love. In promoting one's own identity and culture, it is important to also be able to share the uniqueness of each experience with one another, with this planet, peacefully, and to realize the beauty and harmony of the underlying connections that make us all human. The interconnectedness of our relations is reminiscent of Indigenous peoples' common theme of "creation as a living process, resulting in a living universe in which a kinship exists between all things...all our relations."⁸ These are the relations that allow us to realize the illogic of living in an unsustainable world of war, violence, structural injustices, consumption, environmental destruction, and the premature death of all things. These links also highlight the importance of critically evaluating the deeper issues to expose the cause of the peacelessness within our societies, and furthermore, to challenge these positions to become more compassionate, more loving, and more peaceful.

I am drawn to the process of creating a community dedicated to a culture of peace because it implies that war and violence are not the only answers to our problems. The ability to find some light at the end of the tunnel is vital to the Peace Education pedagogy because it is this hope that will motivate people to take action against the violence in our current world agenda. It is important to remember the ideals of people power—"a secret that is repeatedly forgotten, to be rediscovered every time a new social movement arises."⁹ Although it is easier to "turn off" and become an automaton oblivious to the globalizing forces at play, we can be the agents of the change we wish to see in our world.

Takako Ueda



Miloradz, Poland, 2002. One day, these children learned how to make "Kapusta Kieszona" in kindergarten. Kapusta Kieszona is a preserved food that is eaten during the long winter. In turn, one day these children will pass on this ancestral wisdom and culture to the next generation.



Boruca, Costa Rica, 2008. Villagers held a ritual to express their indigene history. They were invaded by the Spanish over several days following one New Year's Day. Men with masks walked around the village and finally dueled with a bull in one part of the ceremony. The women supported them while the children observed the ritual. The whole village attended the festival.



Nigist Tilahun
Student, Ethiopia

Nigist Tilahun was born and raised in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. She has a B.A. degree in Sociology and Social Administration from Addis Ababa University. Nigist has worked in journalism and communication, and is currently pursuing an M.A in Gender and Peace Studies at UPEACE.



Costa Rica: spending half the night reading 40-something pages, rushing to school in the morning and listening to hours of lectures. Basically, what my life has become since joining UPEACE.

I can imagine what the same date would look like some 14 hours of flight away from Costa Rica, in Ethiopia.

For millions of Ethiopians, the day of September 11 represents the beginning of the New Year. It's full of those things you would do on such a date: hang out with friends, exchange gifts, eat, drink, and celebrate.

September in Ethiopia signifies the end of the hardships of the rainy season and the transition to an abundant harvest season. The sun starts shining, the beautiful daisies bloom and the country turns into green.

Ethiopia follows a distinct and unique calendar dictated by the predominant Orthodox Church, one of the oldest churches in the world. According to the teachings of the church, the world was created 5000 years before the birth of Christ. Based on this timeline, the year 2007, for instance, is the year 2000 in the Ethiopian calendar. This makes the Ethiopian calendar seven and a half years behind the Gregorian calendar. The difference is both in days and years.

September 11 was just a typical day in Ciudad Colon, a small town on the outskirts of San Jose,

The Ethiopian calendar has 12 months of 30 days each and a 13th month with five or six days in leap years.

New Year's day is called Enkutatash, meaning 'the gift of the jewels'. The day is named after the Legend related to the trip made by the famous Ethiopian Queen Sheba to visit King Solomon of Jerusalem. Legend has it that when the queen returned from the visit, her chiefs welcomed her back by replenishing her treasury with 'enku', which literally means pearls or Jewels. The spring festival has been celebrated since these early times and as the rains come to their abrupt end, dancing and singing can be heard at every village in the country.

The day itself, New Year's day, begins early in the morning with young boys going around their neighborhoods giving out drawing of flowers and doves with lettered wishes for a peaceful and prosperous New Year. A little later, young girls dressed in the white cotton traditional clothes decorated with flowers go from house to house singing "Ababayehush," which literally means: Have you seen a Flower? This forwards New Year best wishes and praises the daisies blooming during the season.

The day is spent treating visiting friends and families to spicy Ethiopian traditional dishes and a coffee ceremony.

This September 11, 2007 celebration was unique as it welcomed the New Ethiopian Millennium. The rest of Africa and the world joined Ethiopians in welcoming this special day, which was commemorated with much celebration and joy.

The Legend of Sun and Moon



Nicole Oliveira
Student, Brazil

Nicole Oliveira was born in 1981 in São Paulo, Brazil, where she spent her early years. In 1997 and 1998 she lived in Indiana, U.S.A., where she graduated from high school. Upon her return to São Paulo, she went to law school, graduating in 2004 from Mackenzie University. Currently, she is pursuing a Master's degree at the University for Peace.

Act 1: The Announcement

Sun was a beautiful young man, very strong and intelligent. Moon was a pretty and delicate Indian girl. The two fell in love. After months of dating, the chief of the tribe, Moon's father, announced a grand wedding for his beloved daughter.

As the tribe's only princess, Moon was very spoiled and enjoyed being important. She demanded Sun to act the same way. Sun, who was born a humble and simple man, soon became conceited and wanted to be as lovely as Moon. Drunken with vanity, they both adorned themselves with nature's most beautiful things and competed for the tribe's attention.

Moon, who out of pride never accepted presents from Sun, constantly asked her old father to bring valuable things from the forest. As the wedding approached, she wanted to be the prettiest Indian in the whole tribe. She demanded that her father bring her exotic and rare treasures for the wedding party. Ignoring her father's old age, she insisted that he find her adornments to wear.

Act 2: The Forest

Moon's father set out into the forest to comply with his daughter's wishes. By the river, hunting birds for their exotic feathers, the chief ran into Sun, who was in the forest because he also wanted to find feathers for adornment. The two set out in search of beauty.

All of a sudden, they heard a rustle. High in the sky, flying slowly, they saw a majestic bird perched on a tree. What brilliant colors! What delicate feathers! They were gorgeous!

All colors of the rainbow were represented in this creature. It was the most beautiful thing they had ever seen. Both the Chief and his future son-in-law were so astonished, they stood mesmerized.

Then the bird spread its wings and took flight. Each man prepared his bow, took aim, and shot the arrows. For some reason, Sun, who was a much better hunter, missed, and the chief's arrow hit the flying rainbow. The bird tumbled from the sky and fell in the middle of the river. Both the chief and Sun jumped into the water and struggled for it.

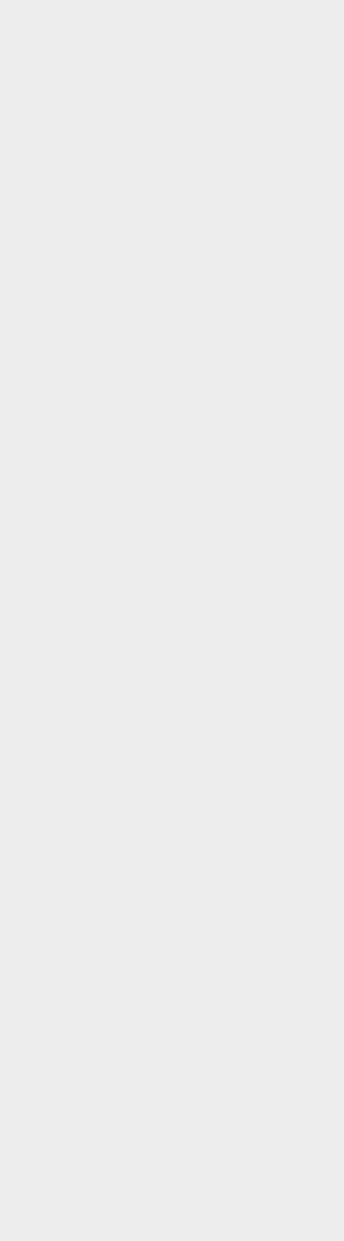
Sun got to the bird first, but offered the catch to the Chief, realizing that it was he who had shot it down. The chief, too proud, could not accept it, and gave it back to Sun. Both were too proud to accept the bird and the beautiful creature was tossed aside in a corner.

Act 3: The Wedding

The day of the wedding soon arrived. Big preparations were made with ample amounts of food and drink. Sun and Moon were very busy taking care of their looks. Sun, seeing the moon so pretty, felt jealous and started fighting with her.

In the heat of the argument, they noticed the bird laying there, abandoned in a corner. Horrified with the idea of ignoring such beautiful creature, Moon accused Sun of being negligent and asked how the bird could lay there, forgotten.

While the fuss was happening, a strange smoke started to rise. Noticing the commotion, the chief called the other members of the tribe. A loud noise struck like an explosion and a burst of smoke appeared.



When sight was finally recovered, instead of the bird, all the Indians saw their god, Tupa himself, personified. They were all trembling.

Tupa looked at the two young Indians and said:

- You are too vain and too proud. All you worry about is being noticed! All you wish for is richness! The feathers I sent you were magic. If you would have shared them, you would have been happy for your entire lives. But vanity won. So now you are cursed to never see each other again. You, Sun, will circle around during the day in solitude. And you, Moon, will circle only at night and will never again cross your beloved Sun.

Immediately, Tupa and the two Indians disappeared. From that day on, Sun and Moon started the dance across the sky in isolation.



Timote Georges
Student, Haiti

Timote Georges is a theologian and agronomist by training, and is currently a student at UPEACE.

When you think of Haiti, what words come to mind? If you are like most people, you might think back to one of the many conflicts faced by my country. And, it is true that there have been many tensions, divisions, and cleavages in Haitian society, particularly at the political level. But, few who have not lived in Haiti would be able to tell you about the rituals and traditions that bind my fellow countrymen and women together.

Here, I would like to share with you a few details about both the challenges to achieving unity in Haiti, as well as those beautiful aspects of community that touch and unite us in our everyday lives.

The Political

Solidarity, equity, equitability - these are some of the values that I imagine would make up a peaceful community, but which are not always present in Haiti. In my country, there have been many divisions and cleavages, particularly at the political level. Our country has known somewhat of a turbulent past, with US occupation from 1915-1934, dictatorship between 1957-1986, a coup d'état in 1991, and military intervention in 2004, to name just a few. It is understandable, then, that Haiti has seen many struggles over political power. Each group tends to pursue its own interests, and at times, this hinders peaceful coexistence at all levels of society.

I remember being in school when some of the conflicts broke out. All of my classmates were supposed to leave the capital in order to ensure their safety, but a sense of uncertainty and tension prevailed. Great progress has been made in restoring stability since then, but political divisions and cleavages have had long-term repercussions on notions

Community in Haiti: the Personal versus the Political

of community and connection. For example, between different communities in Haiti, there is a lack of social responsibility or care for the 'common good'.

We all know John F. Kennedy's famous words: "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country." Well, many of my countrymen and women have become disillusioned not only with their government, but also with their own ability to help the country, their fellow compatriots, and even themselves.

The Personal

That said, if we step away from this macro-level focus of Haiti, a glance at local communal life reveals a million causes for celebration. At the village level, food is an important part of Haitian community. Every day, families share the dishes that they have prepared with their neighbors. It doesn't matter if they have already cooked- they will simply eat more. It also doesn't matter if there isn't enough -everyone will eat just a little bit less. Generally, households exchange dishes, and always eat together.

Every day is an excuse to party in Haiti, and holidays are all the wilder. On January 1st, every family prepares a special kind of Haitian soup that they share with their friends, family, and neighbors. If they do not cook this soup, the New Year is not likely to bring all of the possibilities that it might have to offer - so, the soup is prepared across the entire country! Meanwhile, children get dressed up and go from house to house, greeting other families and receiving small gifts in return.

But, there is nothing that brings Haitians together like Carnival. It is celebrated every year on the Sunday, Monday,

and Tuesday before Ash Wednesday. Carnival is about nothing other than dancing, parades, costumes, and rejoicing life. During three consecutive days, music and celebrations take over whatever worries or troubles may be plaguing Haitians at that time.

Religion also plays an important role in building solidarity and community in my country. Nearly half of Haiti's population is Christian, and the remainder is mainly Roman Catholic. Nevertheless, practices of voodoo are also still ongoing. Voodoo dates back to colonial times. It was a secret language used amongst slaves to revolt against colonial masters, and is closely associated with the country's struggle for independence.

On 14 August 1791, Dutty Boukman, a Voodoo priest, and a group of slaves began to carry out nighttime ceremonies to encourage the spirits to free them from colonial ties. These rituals were practiced until 1 January 1804, when the dream for Haiti's independence was realized. Voodoo is still practiced in my country today, although only by a small segment of the population.

The Political versus the Personal

In short, the notion of community is never black or white. Haiti continues to face a lot of challenges to achieving unity, but there is also great hope to be found at the personal and local levels. The main message is that community needs to be constructed at all levels of society in a holistic way. We need to promote the political, social, and economic equity and equitability of all Haitians, particularly in decision making processes. We also need to respond to the needs of disadvantaged and marginalized Haitians. Without this, peaceful coexistence will never be possible.

This is the reason why I decided to leave my home country and enroll in the Natural Resources and Peace program at UPEACE. I came with the hope that, one day, I could return

to cultivate peace education in my country. I have dreams of helping to stop the vicious cycles of conflict, and of teaching younger generations how to strive for peace in their everyday lives. I can't implement this by myself, but I might be able to make a small contribution with the help of other hands.

I have been inspired by UPEACE to achieve this vision. The University has shown me that peaceful coexistence is possible, but this needs to be practiced, rehearsed, and built. I tell my friends and family back home that if the world were like UPEACE, the world really would be OK. And, I tell myself that, if every UPEACE student carries the message of peace back to his/her own home country, the world will already be a little bit of a better and safer place.

The life of my death

Adria Scharmen Fuentes

I believe I must tell you about my life before I can tell you about my death. And how could I talk about my life without giving my progenitors the credit they deserve for it, them, the most significantly influential people in my short life.

When I learned to walk in the summer of 1965 they were as happy as ever. Of course, they hadn't yet grasped what this meant to me and how far that walk would take me. As dedicated teachers of other people's children, they finally experienced the unknown bliss of teaching their own daughter, especially those things they sometimes could not teach in their classroom. These were my happiest memories: an only child with never-ending games and stories, and the attention of not only my parents, but their many friends and colleagues who would gather evening upon evening talking and planning what I, at the time, could not understand but

loved getting into. Sometimes other children would come with their parents and we would spy from the back rooms pretending to be them. That is how I met Carmen, my most memorable childhood companion. This continued until my tenth birthday, when new words came into their vocabularies, when the overall mood at these gatherings started getting somber and I began to notice that it wasn't at all a game. That is when I grew up.

It was in 1974 that everything changed, the air itself felt poignantly heavier. My parents and their friends had to hide when they met, and suddenly the group lost members. No more children came to the meetings and I stopped wanting to be around the adults. Their attention was somewhere else and it was not amusing anymore. Carmen didn't come anymore, and after an argument with my father her father



¹⁰ David Linn. *In the Family Circle*. 1979. Available at: <http://www.meridianmagazine.com/arts/010822worldview.html>

¹¹ Fernando Botero. *Masacre de Mejor Esquina*. 1997. Available at: <http://www.tinet.org/~cicc/pm/botero-masacre.esquina.html>



ceased coming as well. I spent the next couple of years practically on my own, yearning for things to go back to normal, to the way they were before our country turned upside down. My parents were too busy and secretive at their meetings, more active in their cause than before and more lonely than ever, still not able to comprehend what was truly happening.

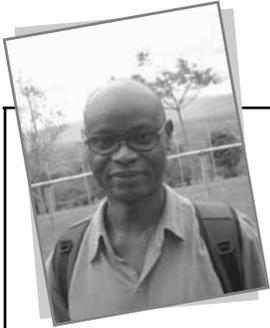
School and books were my only distraction, until I started secondary school and miraculously found Carmen again in the fall of 1979. Carmen brought the light back to my life. She was a couple of years older than me and already involved in underground movements with other students. I immediately joined them and greatly enjoyed meeting with them. It was like the old days, only this time it was real, there was no more pretending. Unfortunately I had very little understanding of reality then, and marveled at the role my new friends gave me. I played it well, and it was thrilling to attend public demonstrations and cause controversies.

My parents usually were not at these demonstrations, they knew of the danger public appearances brought. Yet they continued to be very active, mostly by writing for resistance magazines and continuing with their clandestine meetings. I never told them of my involvement with the student movement, even though they must have found out that dreadful night, just a few months before I was to begin University, when our house was broken into and I was taken away from them. Disappeared, forever.

Everything is a blur of darkness and blood subsequent to that moment. My death came too slowly for my own sake. I have no recollection of time and cannot say how long I was held captive for, but there was no end to it in my mind. I never talked, never gave names and continued to play their game, continued to play my role, even though I understood they were using me to punish my parents. It was their way of suppressing their subversive behavior, of forcing my parents to become the "good" and subordinate citizens they

wanted for the country. I don't know if they ever did, but I never saw them again. If they sacrificed their cause for my life it was all in vain. I died nonetheless and was never given the option of being neither good nor bad for their country again. All sensation vanished with me after what seemed like a few months; body and mind, gone. I no more could listen or react to them, especially after they told me about Carmen's burning body at a protest, her scorching flesh blown by the wind. I bit by bit disappeared with them, with their memory and the ideal of a country I never got to inhabit. That is how it was, the life of my death.

Some aspects of customs within the Nzebi community



**Sava Mathias
Mounange-Badimi**

Student, Gabon

*Sava Mathias
Mounange-Badimi
was raised
in the Nzebi country.
He left his home village
at age 12
to attend high school
120 km away.
He has grown
with independent Gabon.
Being a
"Child of the Independence,"
he has a good sense
of his country's progress
and setbacks.
Sava is currently
studying in the
Environmental Security
and Peace Program
at UPEACE.*

I invite the reader to take a walk with me, throughout the Nzebi space, in Central Africa. I may not be a good commentator, but you can count on my sincerity as guide. I am going to take you where, spontaneously, my spirit and brain will tell my feet to lead us.

The Nzebi space

There is a place on earth -one among other similar places, hopefully- where people have, for centuries, practiced respect and care for their community of life. That place is in the Nzebi Country, situated south of Gabon and west of Congo Brazza, in West Central Africa. This modest paper is a witness of things I have experienced in my life, being Nzebi myself, and having grown up in a Nzebi village in Gabon.

BaNzebi (Ba is a prefix for plural in many Bantu idioms) are generally described as courageous, determined, patient, enduring, and peaceful people. In the Nzebi society, honesty, integrity, righteousness, and nobility of the spirit are the assets one needs to live long. For the Nzebi people, the clan is the alpha and omega of the community. A Nzebi feels very secure within his clan. The clan is the compass, the reference, the identity, the landmark, lifelong guideline. *The Clan has no boundaries.*

There are many ways that the Nzebi show respect and care for the community of life in the village and in nature.

In the village

When a child is born within a family, he belongs both to the family and the village. The foundations of his education are respect for life, respect for his being and others' being,

respect for and protection of nature, for one's security and the security of others. His awareness of the existence and needs of other people is particularly encouraged and supported. A member of the community must always think: Mè, Besu. In English: Me, We.

"You shall respect whoever has seen the sun before you."

The ultimate goal of children's education and teachings of life's realities is to render them fit to survive when their parents and protectors are away. A child is taught that the nearest person to him who "has seen the sun before" him is his elder brother or sister, his father or mother, his grandfather or grandmother. The philosophy of respect for elders, in a "modern" context, includes young supervisors or teachers who have seen the sunlight before their students.

Blessed be the deserving child

When a very young man (8-16 years) is lucky enough to catch a big game during a collective hunting session or to catch a big fish, his father calls the whole family. In particular, the chiefs of both clans, from the father's and mother's side, organize a solemn ceremony at which the child is amply blessed.

Your child is not your slave

When a man or a woman is correcting his or her child by scolding or even spanking her, a neighbor, passer-by, or even a group of persons might interfere if they think the parent is abusing his or her child. The observer(s) will say: "Your child, I agree, but...not your slave!" No one will go away until the parent, ashamed, stops beating the child.

"The orphan child gets educated from someone else's uncle"

For a child who has lost his parents, there is always somebody to adopt him and raise him like any other kid. Since the Clan has no boundaries, the possibility always exists for anybody to be somebody's relative.

"Here are your village, your family, and your property"

These are the words of welcome addressed to the traveler who finds himself far from home, in a land where he has never been before. After he salutes the first people he meets in the foreign land, he introduces himself by stating his name(s), the clan of his father, mother, grandparents and ancestors, and the name of his village or town. Then, someone from the surrounding crowd will step forward and tell him: "Welcome home. Your bath, meal and bed are ready." If the traveler decides to settle in this place, the members of his clan will give him what he needs to start a new life: land, cattle, and even a spouse.

No beggars allowed

The sense of dignity is very deep within the Nzebi community. Each person's dignity is considered the dignity of all of humanity. Begging is considered a disgrace. The society does not understand how someone would not work for himself or for the good of the community. Therefore, the community organizes itself to make sure that no one will beg for a living. One typical case is that of an old childless widow. The men of the village build a house for her. They prepare her crop field. They make sure she lacks no fuel to cook her food and that she always has her share of meat or fish or fruits, particularly when she is absent. In return, she participates in community life the best she can, and makes sure to bring her contribution of cooked food to the men's shelter in the afternoon.

Reimburse the dead

One vivid custom of the Nzebi practice since time immemorial is to consider that a lost life must be paid for back. Here is how it is done: when someone older than six months passes away, representatives of all seven clans gather for the mourning ceremonies. After the burial, there is an Ikumbu, a "Ceremony of Reimbursement." The one who pays is the husband if the deceased was a married woman, the father if the deceased was a man or a single woman, or the clan of the ex-husband if the deceased was a divorced woman.

Blood forbidden

In Nzebi society, it is forbidden for children and women to see human blood or a dead human body. This is a way to protect their sensitivity.

Stealing, humanity, and inhumanity

Having spent long hours far from home, you are hungry. You pass by a private tree bearing fruits: avocado, oranges, banana, apples, or cherries. You decide to pick up some fruits to feed yourself, and will report to the owner. This is alright, but the fruits must be ripe. If your hunger makes you eat immature fruits (with the possibility to make you sick), or wild or domestic animals that are too young (cattle, goat, sheep, chicken, duck, pigeon, etc), you are not humane: you are inhumane and will be tried for having lacked respect towards Nature.

Recycling garbage and bio-gardening, an immemorial Nzebi practice

The Nzebi hate littering garbage. Long before the "novelty" of recycling became common practice in "modern" life, villagers

had been using household garbage for growing crops in gardens behind their homes. This is knowledge drawn from observing the healthy state of crops planted in such gardens.

Celebrating the renewal of life: the new crops

A very pleasant ceremony, called Lelagh, is organized every year, during the short dry season (mid-December to mid-February), when families make their first harvest of new crops. This is exactly 3 to 5 months after the return of the short rainy season (mid-September). Each family contributes by bringing all kinds of crops, fish, meat, fruits, drinks, etc. These are all gathered in a big men's shelter, on giant leaves, on the floor. The ceremony starts with a parade at one extremity of the village, where spots have been prepared on the ground. In each spot is deposited a specific kind of food. The food is blessed and offered to the Ancestors. Then, chanting and dancing, the procession returns to the shelter, the children first. The children are seated first around the collection of cooked food. At a given signal, they help themselves to whatever they like. That evening, the children are allowed to eat all they want. The huge dinner is really enjoyable, and people do appreciate exchanging and complementing plates and recipes. This "new crops" ceremony is usually the ceremony kids look most forward to each year. It is the time the community asks for blessings from Nzembi-a-Pungu, God the Almighty, for the new harvest and the abundance in the nature.

The country of plenty

The Nzebi territory is forested and mountainous. It is crossed by hundreds of rivers and clear-water streams. Depending on the season, fierce storms and the accompanying lightning and thunder are common. People take their livelihood from the forest, where they establish their crop plantations, hunt, and fish.

Clearing the way

The day following a strong wind, if you are the first to wake up and go to the fields to collect foodstuff, you might find that a fallen tree has blocked the public road. Though you have the possibility to deviate, you must, before continuing your way, clear the way for the people who will pass after you.

Water is sacred, and the river belongs to the community

When walking in the forest while minding your business, you might need to satisfy a natural need. But you are near a river or a small stream. You must not pee there, or satisfy your natural need in the vicinity of the water, as you are aware that there might be somebody using the water downstream. Therefore, you will always displace yourself as far as you can before you relieve yourself. And, remember: a river, small or big, will never be private property. Free access to water is inalienable.

Lock the tree, the forest, the river

Water, vegetation, and Nature are sacred. Irrational exploitation of resources in the forest can deplete them and create a path to scarcity and thus conflict. The Nzebi have found a way to sustain and renew resources through the practice of "locking" a particular resource. "Locking" means that the Council of the Elder organizes a traditional ceremony at which the locked resource is declared forbidden for use or exploitation. The immediate consequence of the interdiction is that no fruit from the locked tree will be picked nor eaten, nor game from the locked forest be caught for consumption, nor, finally, fish from the locked river be taken nor eaten. The interdiction lasts until the Council of the Elder declares the fruits ripe, or the forest or the river adequately populated. Another formal ceremony is then organized, at which the

Council “unlocks” the tree, the forest or the river. The harvesting is then organized to make sure that each family will get enough, and that the village will benefit from the resource during a certain time.

The privilege of having people: the shield

Old people are honored within the Nzebi community, like everywhere in Africa. They live in the same house as the younger members of their family. They are the depositories of knowledge, experience, love, and authority. Respect towards them is absolute. Each family is proud to take care of its elders, and everybody struggles to obtain the privilege of looking after the old men and women. They are the ones who guard the village, day and night. They wake up first in the morning and go to bed last at night. Children and their grandparents have a particular relationship, like everywhere in the world, of course. A Nzebi saying illustrates this special bond: “A son, a daughter is his or her parents’ heart. A girl, a boy is her or his grandparents’ soul.” Needless to say, grandparents feel that it is their unique duty to transmit traditions and family memories to their little ones.

I discourage you because I am your friend

Being loyal to a friend is when you discourage him by making him give up a negative action. If you did not care for him, you would just let him pursue his bad ways.

Concluding comment

The walk I have just taken with the reader remains open. Along the way, I hope the reader noticed that Nzebi behavior is comparable to all other human communities’ behavior. The reader could perhaps regret that the deeply rooted respect and care for the community of life observed within the Nzebi community, as almost second nature, is dangerously challenged in “modern” life, starting with the TV.

First, viewing human blood and corpses is common on TV, and our children are exposed to violence. What present and future mentalities are the media shaping for them? Secondly, respect for the ones who have “seen the sun before us” is not often a standard anymore: people are free to choose whom to respect, even those who don’t deserve respect, and this constitutes a threat to peace. Finally, rare now are people who discourage their friends from undertaking wrong deeds. Complicity for actions that destroy peace in our time is preferred to loyalty for noble achievements and progress for humankind. But the reader should not think that the values I’ve just written about have disappeared. They are still there, in the remaining villages and in towns where people are realizing, more and more, that reassuming these values is the most secure way to resume our positive evolution.

My stories come from this 80,000 hectare territory of mountains, forests, and clear-water streams.

IV. The Earth, Our Home



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Bonnie Mahl

Student, United States

Bonnie Mahl is a Master's Student pursuing a dual degree in Natural Resources and Sustainable Development at American University in Washington D.C and the University for Peace in Costa Rica. She is from Virginia in the United States.

I have this thing about acorns. It all started one day when I was walking and came across one. I picked it up and started really looking at it. Mind you, I've picked up countless acorns before, though I'd usually dissect them to get to the actual nut. This time, instead of dissecting it with my hands, I dissected it with my eyes. I was amazed by the interknit design on the cap of the acorn. How is it that nature knows how to create something so simple as an acorn with such a precise design? After looking closely at that acorn, I had a new-found appreciation for nature's simplistic and beautiful design. Such symmetry and preciseness exist throughout the natural world, from massive trees to small acorns. Works of human design end up in large cities and museums, but works of nature's design can be found everywhere. All we have to do is open our eyes to the world around us and take time to really look at what we see.



Alicia Jimenez

*Earth Charter Project Coordinator,
Costa Rica*

Alicia Jimenez has worked in conservation and sustainable development since 1998, after graduating from the University of Costa Rica as a biologist. For several years, she worked at the IUCN Mesoamerican Regional Office and then started a professional services co-op. In both of these roles, she completed extensive field work in community conservation and environmental education. In 2002, Alicia moved to the USA to complete an MSc in Resource Development at Michigan State University. She then moved back to Costa Rica, and started to work at the National University of Costa Rica.

Cloud Seeding - An Example of 'Community of Life' in Practice!

'Community of life'... the first time I read the Earth Charter, this concept really resonated with me... it was what I had been looking for in a formal document related to sustainable development. As the Brazilian theologian Leonardo Boff once said in one of his articles, this concept expresses a spiritual sense of all beings helping each other, being important for one another, being connected in some way. This is so profound and at the same time difficult, at least for me, to grasp.

Sometimes I wonder -How am I connected with living beings that I don't even know exist? (And, they probably don't know that I exist either!) Moreover, what's my connection with all people around the world, especially those whom I have never met and probably never will? What about species living very far away? Can they have an impact on my livelihood? In short, how is this concept of 'community of life' lived out in practice?

While reflecting on this, I remembered a story that was astonishing for me, and which helped me to have a better grasp about what the 'community of life' is. It is the story about how clouds are formed...

Clouds... for me, there was nothing exceptional about them. I used to think that they were only water vapor ready to be transformed into rain - until I read a story in Stephen Harding's "Animate Earth"¹². This is a scientific book that talks about the Earth's capacity to regulate its temperature and conditions. In short, it explains the Gaia theory, but the explanation about cloud seeding is really quite exciting. Of course, I won't be able to give you all the fantastic details of this very complex process, but at the very least, I'll give you a glance.

I should have known that clouds are not only water vapor - after all, every time I boil water, there aren't exactly clouds forming in my kitchen! There are other basic ingredients that make water vapor have that consistency - the most important being dimethyl sulphide (DMS). This gas is very important for bringing the water molecules together and forming 'planet cooling clouds' which, as Stephan Harding put it, are like "the hair of the Earth." There are in fact many different types of clouds with different purposes. For example, 'low clouds', such as marine stratus, help to cool the Earth (and us of course!) by reflecting much of the heat from the sun. 'High clouds', such as cirrus, ensure that not all heat is reflected, helping our Earth to maintain temperatures that allow all beings to live.

It amazes me that, despite all the advancements in science and technology, it was only recently that scientists started to understand how DMS is produced and released into the atmosphere. In other words, it was only recently that scientists still didn't have a clue about how clouds are formed! It was James Lovelock and his colleagues who discovered that it is a whole range of organisms that are in charge of producing this very important gas. It turns out that many different algae in our oceans are the major producers of DMS!

Now, how and why do algae play such an important role? It seems that when the sea starts to get warm, algae populations start growing. With more algae, there is also more DMS expelled into the air, and hence, more dense clouds are formed. These clouds help to cool down the temperature of the ocean; then, when this gets cooler, algae populations once again diminish. When there are fewer

¹²Harding, Stephen. *Animate Earth. Science, Intuition and Gaia*. London: Green Books Ltd, 2006.

She also became involved in the Earth Charter Initiative while working at the National University, as this is a very close partner of the ECI. In 2006, Alicia joined the Earth Charter Costa Rica team and is very happy to have found her dream job.

algae, less DMS is produced and fewer clouds are formed... and so forth.

It seems that it is beneficial for algae to produce and expel DMS. The most important advantage is the possibility of dispersal - which is crucial for finding new places with new sources of food. What amazes me is that, as the algae pump DMS into the atmosphere and clouds start forming, a huge quantity of energy is released as heat, which makes the clouds rise. In Harding's words: The newly forming clouds literally hoist themselves aloft, sucking air in behind them, creating waves in the ocean. The algae that are close to the water surface during a strong upward gust, it stands a good chance of being sucked up into the air and rapidly and ascends to the cloud.¹³

Then, when it rains, the algae can find a new spot where they can reproduce and hopefully find more food. Can you imagine, algae riding the clouds? I never thought that organisms could actually live in the clouds! But, algae are not the only ones responsible for producing DMS - coral reefs do, too, when they become affected from rising temperatures in the ocean. Terrestrial life also contributes to DMS production. Bromeliads, a kind of aerial pineapple that lives on tree branches in the rainforest, collect water that is full of microbes. Many of these are algae which, in turn, produce DMS.

Trees in the rainforest also produce molecules similar to DMS, which also help to condense water into clouds. Similarly, temperate forests, moss-covered peat bogs and, to a lesser extent, northern boreal forests, are all able to seed clouds. These clouds are of great importance for all of us, because they help to regulate the Earth's temperature. But, now, we increasingly face an urgent and desperate situation, where increasing CO2 levels are changing temperatures in ways that many organisms, like algae, find it difficult to adapt... but, this is another issue...

¹³Ibid., p.139.

Overall, I guess what I wanted to say is that cloud seeding is just one of the countless examples of how many different species on Earth work in an orchestrated way to not only create better living conditions for themselves, but in doing so, to also create better living conditions for the entire community of life.

But, what about human beings and our role within this community of life? Why are we affecting it so much? It seems that our feelings of disconnectedness are not leading to very promising paths. So, what makes us become more connected with other living beings? This question could lead to endless discussions. However, perhaps one of the reasons behind our feelings of disconnectedness could be our ignorance about other living and non-living beings. It's just like what happens with human communities - if you don't know who 'the others' are, what they think, etc, then you probably won't care for or about them.

Similarly, it's very difficult for many of us, living in urban areas, to feel connected to the natural world when we are so separated from it. It's hard to have the same wisdom as those who have had a very close relationship with other living beings - after all, it is through this relationship that we develop understanding, knowledge and respect. But, I think that we, urban dwellers, might have some hope in acquiring at least part of this knowledge through the research that many scientists carry out in their quest to understand life-systems on Earth. We could have a lot to learn from those living in rural areas, especially indigenous groups, who have a strong sense of respect for their own place and the place of other living beings within the community of life (even though they probably don't use this term!) Finally, perhaps we, urban dwellers, could also gain a sense of connection by simply looking up at the clouds once in a while to remember just how incredibly and intricately linked we truly are.

Hay Bale

Amy Gaines



The Spirit of Community



Anna Duhon

Student, United States

Anna Duhon is currently a Master's student in "Natural Resources and Peace" at the University for Peace, with an A.B. in Social Anthropology from Harvard University. She is from Western Massachusetts, and still finds her sense of home rooted in the hills, small towns, and farmland there despite many years of following passions and opportunities far afield. Some of her most defining moments have been spent living in community, or working at the intersection of human and environmental needs and wellness. It is also her great joy to farm!

For most of my life, community was a word like any other. But, sometimes we are blessed with the opportunity to crash through the meaning of words into their vivid, living revelation. I would call this encountering the spirit of a word.

I first encountered the spirit of community while I was living and working at a healing farm community that welcomes guests with mental illness. I particularly remember a warm September evening, coming out from the barns bearing freshly made ice cream, to a community picnic celebrating the newly built outdoor brick oven. In easy rest and laughter, we sat on the grassy hill overlooking the farmyard and summer-laden gardens, and beyond, the ancient rolling hills of New England. All the paths that led to that moment were ripe and brimming - the bricks layered to build the oven; the vegetables harvested for the meal; the early morning milkings and afternoons spent turning ice cream; a season of hard work shared together.

I looked around at the gathering of such different people - kids and elders, guests and staff, those passing through, and those rooted for decades to those hills - and saw and loved the wholeness in each person, and a larger wholeness encompassing fields, cows, mountains...all. The revelation is no more profound than that the world is right, and we all belong. Such transcendent moments seemed to flow naturally through the rhythm of my days at the farm, and expand all understandings. The spirit of community redefines the edges of oneself, of others; of identities, worlds, and visions of possibilities.

The problem is, I'm not sure one can ever recover from such community; it is not to be recovered from, but encompassed within everyday life. Yet, often, our world does not nurture the conditions that give rise to it. We do not stay in place.

We don't live and work and play beside each other, or honor and share the bounty of old mountains and generous fields. At the same time, I am struck by how the spirit of community can transcend all of these elements and alight in the smallest of moments - a stranger's passing smile, the dusk chorus of birdsong, a shared meal. Perhaps it is always there to be realized and accepted, and then the only task becomes: to trace of our lives a path of ripe and brimming moments.



Candy Henderson

Student, United States

*Candy Henderson
is a graduate student
in International Affairs at American
University, Washington, D.C.,
and a graduate of the University
for Peace, Costa Rica.*

*She is currently living
in the U.S. and is working
on her second short film,
untitled *Not In My Backyard*,
about trash disposal
and collection.*

*She enjoys peaceful
encounters with nature,
the company of good people,
and freshly canned
pear preserves spread
on a warm buttermilk biscuit.*

When I started Water/Art, I was on an internship where I drove one-and-a-half hours to and from work, and it was raining a lot in the evenings by the time I made it home. So, I thought I'd make the best of it, took after-hours video footage, and combined it with some I'd already taken in Costa Rica and New York. In that respect, you could say that the topic of water 'fell on me like rain'. I am glad that it did. Water is such an important aspect of all of our lives and it deserves to be appreciated - like a piece of art.

To see Water/Art, visit:

<http://www.earthcharterinaction.org/youth/2001/01/waterart.html>

Tree Planting / Bakhrom-aka, Uzbek Farmer, Shows Off His Wheat Harvest

Keiko Sasaki
and
Dominic Stucker



*Tree Planting,
Keiko Sasaki*



*Bakhrom-aka, Uzbek Farmer, Shows Off His Wheat Harvest,
Dominic Stucker*

The Harvest: A Short Story of Resilience



Marissa L. Bond
Student, United States

*Born and raised
in the foothills of the Appalachians,
A nature enthusiast at heart:*

*Lover of life and all her beauty
Natural wanderer
Curiously Experimental
Drifting on the wind
Enjoys an ocean or river swim*

*Mountain climbing
Trail tramping
Tree admiring
Meditating cross legged
amid the grass*

*And, so as to completely reveal
my inner self,
A confession:*

*I find that I completely
lose myself
In the wondrous
world of libraries*

Born and raised in a small farming community of southeastern Pennsylvania, I was nurtured to appreciate the abundant splendor of the surrounding environment and of Earth's bounty. Benefiting from Earth's fertile provisions, each member of my family took great pride in harvesting the fruits of the nearby soil, stream, and forest. The benevolence of the harvest represents, for me, the spirit of resilience, for it provides my family with a great amount of food and livelihood security, without which we would subsist on a familial livelihood of a diverse essence.

As a young girl and into adolescence, I remember that, with the coming of each spring and autumn season, I would collect a variety of local fruits and berries. We would use these fruits to supplement our diet: mulberries and seedless grapes, full-fledged for some time on our land; strawberries and pears from our neighbor's lawn and pear tree, respectively; crabapples and more mulberries from across the local train tracks; cantaloupe, pumpkin and winter squash spawned from seedlings embedded within our compost. We respected and cared for our environment, and, in turn, we contented in receiving what we were able to use of the earth.

As time passed, and as I began to journey deeper into the forest, I was able to gather raspberries and blackberries from the local Appalachian mountainsides. I remember being both astonished and amazed at how much subsistence the earth would naturally provide. My two brothers and I would spend summer days basking in the waters of a local crick, a hidden treasure within the woods surrounding our home. There, we

would catch crawfish and freshwater fish of a variety of species, including rainbow trout and brownies, amongst others. At a relatively early age, my brothers were taught by my father how to harvest an even greater bounty from the earth.

With the changing colors of the trees, my father and brothers would set out on foot to hike through the valleys and rolling hills in search of a buck of grandeur or a doe without young. Because there are three hunters in my family, we had the opportunity to harvest three deer -yet my family only ever took two, at most. "Waste not, want not," my father always said. Surely, he learned this from the humility of his mother, who raised him and his siblings in a manner much alike my parents raised their own.

Our experience as a household in the small farming community was unique in that my family owned and operated a Ma and Pa shop, named Wanamakers General Store.¹⁴ It was through this shop that we supported the food security in our local community of Wanamakers as well as that of ourselves. Implied in the meaning of store, we were blessed with the ability to maintain the storage of reserve foods, upon which my family and other community households could depend in times of need. In the winter months, when families are often incapacitated for days on end, those courageous enough would make their way by foot to our store, where they would purchase necessary supplies such as water and staple foodstuffs. Although we have since moved to a new home and have sold the store to another family, my family provided a very real service to

¹⁴Based on your knowledge of my story, The Harvest, this website shows you my home:

<http://www.wanamakersgeneralstore.com>. You can view the home page and contact page to see photos.

This is where I grew up and my family is so very proud to pass on the tradition to our dear friends, the Hungaskis, pictured on the home page.

"Please see 'History' page for a visual representation of my family, our general store and of my home community, the Village of Wanamakers."

our community by means of maintaining the principle food resource. Like my family, however, other community members also depended greatly on the natural abundance of Earth's giving.

While farming and livestock rearing has occurred throughout generations past and present in my family, the only animal husbandry my family had ever undergone was the raising of egg-producing hens, whose product we would often share with members of our community. Within my own family, we had cultivated our previously owned land, and continue to cultivate the soil of our new homestead when the rains are frequent and the earth is fertile enough to provide a plethora. Vegetables, such as sweet corn, vine tomatoes, bell peppers, lettuce, spinach, and a variety of spices and herbs, used both in flavoring and adding nutrients to prepared food as well as for homeopathy, are grown in our garden and supplement purchases from the grocery. These provide a healthy and organic alternative to store-bought produce. We also harvest the sour cherries, raspberries and blackberries found on our land, which we share with neighbors and extended family members, particularly with one uncle who always provides us with freshly picked strawberries and plum tomatoes grown on his land.

Also cultivated on our soil is a variety of crops, each of which serves its own intrinsic purpose in a system of interconnectedness with the environment and the local community. A field of clover feeds the wild turkeys and deer, which, one day, will in turn be ready to harvest for consumption. A field of sunflowers provides a rich food for the variety of bird species native to our environment; whose distinct voices carry on the wind and whose rainbow of colors pleases the eye. Finally, the local farmer cuts, bales and uses a field of timothy to feed his own livestock, and this also plows our mountain road access during the winter months. This makes it easier for my parents to purchase food from the grocery and to reach their jobs, enabling the

sustainability of their food security and livelihood security, respectively.

Since the sale of our store, our means of avoiding the occurrence of household food insecurity are of a slightly different nature. While my family is no longer able to provide for the community, we still maintain our own personal storage. With the approaching of the winter months, my mother will always stock up on canned and dry goods. This is a means of evading any resemblance of hunger that may result with an excessive accumulation of snow and ice that, without doubt, would restrict us to the confines of our homestead. Even in this occurrence, we are fortunate that we live in an environment of abundance and that we are able to pride ourselves on a sense of community, which allows us to turn to our surroundings in times of need.

While this interdependence on community and environment is always underlying our actions, my family has established that we are able to procure our food security through a system of hunting, gathering, growing, and storing. In essence, the glory of the harvest enables our resilience against food insecurity and provides for our secure livelihoods. I have every intention of passing on this knowledge to my children as my parents have onto theirs.

Sanja Beker
o
Kosana Beker?



Community-Based Rural Tourism in Costa Rica: An Example of Respect and Care for the Community of Life in Practice



**Marina V. Garcia
Perea**

(translated by Lisa Jokivirta)
UPEACE Intern, Mexico

Marina Garcia is 27 years of age, and lives in Mexico City. She completed a Bachelor's in Law, and is currently undertaking a Master's in International Cooperation for Development at the Institute for Social Research (Instituto de Investigaciones Sociales) Dr. Jose Maria Luis Mora. She worked as an attorney after finishing her undergraduate studies, and then at the National Council for Science and Technology (CONACYT) prior to commencing her current program. Marina's thesis is on local



How can we briefly express what 'respect and care for the community life', the first principle of the Earth Charter, means to us? How can we show to the world

that we understand what this is, and how we can apply this principle to our daily lives? More importantly, how can people protect the community of life without foregoing socio-economic development? Although this does not seem possible, I tried to get to the bottom of this by studying Community-based Rural Tourism (CRT) in Costa Rica.

As a Master's student in International Cooperation for Development, I am interested in showing that community development is not exclusively achieved through political reform. Development can be spearheaded from within the community itself, even in highly marginalized and forgotten areas. However, here, I am not referring to 'development' in the post-modern sense of the term, often associated with urban living, industrialization, over-consumption, and environmental degradation. Rather, I hope to convey that the development of rural communities should imply progress for all community members, including access to public services and the conservation of the land where the communities are based.

It is precisely in rural communities that people have direct contact with their natural surroundings, and recognize the value of the resources upon which their livelihoods depend. Local community members are generally seeking to protect

their environment in order to ensure the sustainability of resources for future generations. This type of sustainable development is precisely what some rural communities in Costa Rica have been hoping to achieve through their involvement in Community-based Rural Tourism (CRT).

By definition, CRT consists of planned touristic experiences which are integrated sustainably with the rural environment and developed by local organizations for the benefit of the community. There are many benefits to CRT. These include: combating poverty by supplementing family income; integrating revenue-generating activities into the natural wealth and daily lives of local populations; and preserving cultures and traditions. The main vision is to adapt sustainable tourism practices to rural contexts, in order to empower local populations to actively care for the environment, generate employment opportunities, and prevent migration into urban areas.

It becomes evident, then, that CRT simultaneously promotes respect and care for the community of life, and the economic well-being of rural communities that have adopted this principle. Specialized development agencies have helped rural communities in Costa Rica to achieve a



balance between these two objectives, mainly through a policy of international decentralized cooperation. This type of

development through decentralized international cooperation, with a focus on Community-Based Rural Tourism in Costa Rica.

cooperation is designed to provide external support to community-based projects, while promoting the self-empowerment of local community members. The vision is to facilitate capacitybuilding and sustainable development practices in rural communities, through collaboration between international and national non-government organizations, government agencies, and the private sector.

Through external support and funding, most rural communities in Costa Rica have managed to either register themselves as a CRT-oriented Association or Cooperative. This has enabled them to access resources for technical and financial support, including training local community members in the marketing and coordination of local tourism activities. Other topics included in the training range from customer service, food handling, and English classes, to building infrastructure, new technologies, and sustainable production practices.

One interesting example of CRT in action is the Association for the Conservation and Development of Carbone Dos (ASODEC), a community located close to the National Park of Cahuita, in the southern part of Limón Province. This Association was initially focused exclusively on protecting the land owned by the community. Over time, 'Casa Calateas'

was opened as a community-based tourism center aimed at promoting Costa Rican Caribbean culture as well as environmental conservation best practices. It mainly aims to raise awareness about local flora and fauna, the regional cuisine, and calypso music. The center also organizes visits to local farms and schools to improve local consumption patterns and promote conservation efforts. These activities benefit not only members of the Association, but also the community of Carbone Dos at large.



Another example of a Community-based Rural Tourism organization is the Association for Sustainable

Development of Rural San Jose. Located in Palmichal de Acosta, in San Jose Province, this Association is focused on environmental education and the conservation of 42 hectares of community-owned land. With the support of external partners within the decentralized international cooperation scheme, the Association is particularly involved in raising awareness about water management issues amongst local community members and building biodegradors in the area. The Association also opened a CRT-oriented center to encourage visitors to tour around local farms and taste the local cuisine. The center, named "Nacientes Palmichal", also offers lectures on Community-based Rural Tourism and topics such as water management. There are many examples of sustainable living practices at the center, including solar-powered cooking and organic farming.

These two examples show that it is possible to actively practice respect and care for the community of life through CRT. Both associations are concerned with not only environmental conservation and the sustainable use of resources, but also the social and cultural well-being of the local communities. At the time of writing, there are more than 70 CRT initiatives underway in Costa Rica. These are all concerned with raising awareness about the culture and traditions of rural communities; protecting their natural environment; and, promoting socio-economic justice through local and inclusive participation.

I hope that this brief overview of my research has conveyed the potential of CRT to teach rural communities about the notion of respect and care for the community of life. I also hope that I have shown how understanding leads to action in these cases. The CRT initiatives have inspired community organizations to apply the first principle of the Earth Charter not only as a framework for their tourism activities, but also as a guiding principle in their everyday lives.

Community in Season: Memories of Gould Farm



Dominic Stucker

*Earth Charter International Youth
Coordinator,
Germany and the United States*

*Dominic is a young father of twin
boys who cares deeply about
the future of the Earth
and the community of life.
He is a strong promoter of youth
leadership in bringing about a
just, sustainable,
and peaceful world.*

*He also has a keen interest
in sustainable livelihoods,
especially in rural,
developing contexts.*

*In 2006, Dominic graduated
from the Master's program
in Environmental Security and
Peace at the University for Peace,
Costa Rica.*

*He also holds degrees in
Education and Comparative
Literature from Brown University
and Stanford University.
Over the course of three years,
he worked with humanitarian*

Brisk sunrise and thaw
spring in northeast Appalachia
as a child
boiling sap in the sugar house.

Clouds sweet
billowing forth humid
logs ablaze all night
and frozen candy in the snow.

Breakfast at the Roadside Store
steaming hot
whole wheat goodness
with blueberries and
maple syrup -
pure delight produced
in community.

Snowmelt
swollen torrent and
daffodils in the streambed
bright yellow
buoyant fragrance.

School's out
summer job on the Farm
or waiting tables.

I collected eggs at 12
and washed them -
a penny for each
and well-beloved by the cats.

Later dishwashing
catering cloud-enshrouded
Scottish bagpipe weddings
serving hors d'oeuvres
to the bride's maids.

Spent the money
on rock climbing gear
learned the ropes and taught friends
to rise above their fears -
mind over matter
trust
endeavoring to persevere.

Reap the harvest
and put up hay in the fall.
Twine taught across
callous hands,
searing sun and no shade.

Jump in the Falls at dusk
swinging high on the thick rope
revelry and respite with friends
and work well done.

School's back in
-was it ever out? -
for we are
students of the world.

Cross-country skiing amidst birch
and tall pines
proud
mournful
swaying.

*and educational
organizations
in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan,
and Tajikistan.
He also has two years'
experience working
as a mental healthcare
professional.
Dominic is originally from
Germany and was raised in
the USA.
At present, he works as
Earth Charter's International
Youth Coordinator, based in
Costa Rica.*

Long-shadow sunset,
now beneath blazing sharp starlight,
the brook runs frigid
over hibernating stones.

The roaring sauna
ensconced in snow
full of laughter, singing
and friends.

The piercing cold plunge -
invigorating
life-affirming
howling delight
naked
at the moon.



Food Security in Favela do Luxou



Diana Stoecklin
Student, Switzerland

Diana Stoecklin was born August 22, 1978 in Basel, Switzerland. She attended Hotel Business School in Lausanne, and graduated in June 2003 with a B.Sc. in International Hospitality Management. She has worked in various countries including the Dominican Republic, where she managed a Hotel for two years, Ecuador, where she participated in a Tourism and Hospitality Project in the Andes for the International Trade Center (WTO), and Brazil, where she worked as a volunteer. She has also worked in Hawaii, Mexico, and Costa Rica.

While working as a volunteer in a Street and Risk Children Project in Fortaleza, Brazil¹⁵, I was invited to stay with a family in the *Favela do Luxou*, where many of the children I worked with also lived. The *Favela do Luxou* is one of four Favelas situated at Praia do Futuro, right by the ocean. The area is slightly remote from the rest of Fortaleza, with much less infrastructure and a reduced amount of public transportation.

Through my work with the children, their parents and their communities, and through my own experience living in a household in the Favela, I have gained a better understanding of life in extreme poverty and how people cope with it.

During my stay in the Favela, I witnessed a number of families going through severe shocks and distresses: financial (i.e. a member of the family losing employment and income, or rising expenses due to hospital and medical bills), human (i.e. losing a family member through death or imprisonment, illness, violation, or sexual abuse), and physical (losing their belongings through water damage, fire, house collapse). Clearly, such events have a major impact on the household and can lead to food and/or livelihood insecurity.

It is important to know how people react to certain events (i.e. accept, tolerate, surrender, master). My host family in the Favela was quite religious and they would accept a stressful situation by accepting that it was God's will. I find that the personal and psychological way that people cope with a stressful situation is an important indicator of how resilient they are to food and livelihood insecurity.

My host-family would cope with food insecurity by changing their diet. The type of food would change by the third week of the month, as the finances (monthly income) would come to an end. My host mom would buy cheaper and a lesser variety of food, often skimming the meals down to only rice and beans. One of my host sisters would spend the last days or week of the month with her baby's father's family, whom she disliked, in order to decrease the number of people eating. Another form of coping strategy I witnessed in the Favela was taking children out of school and having



¹⁵Associação Curumins: NGO in Fortaleza, Brazil, that works with street children and children at risk. For more information, visit their website: www.curumins.org.br

Diana speaks five languages (German, French, English, Spanish and Portuguese), and is currently pursuing a Master's in International Law and Human Rights.

them sell items to tourists on the beach, or do other work to increase the household income. Others would send the children to projects like the Project Curumins, in order to get its monthly subventions. Families who send their children to the Curumins Project receive a certain amount of money every month to substitute the income their children would make working on the beach or street. The children also have access to showers, hygienic products and to a balanced meal.

The way the community is assisting households can also indicate their level of resilience. Important examples include community involvement, information-sharing about risk and preventive actions, networking, and cooperation with NGOs, just to mention a few. In the *Favela do Luxou* we had monthly community meetings, therapy group sessions, information sessions (for example, about their rights), and cross-community meetings (all led by community workers from the Project Curumins), which were used as a platform for information-sharing, and providing advice and expertise to the residents, especially the women.



Financial, human, social, physical and natural assets are helpful indicators of the resilience of a household to food and/or livelihood insecurity. In the *Favela do Luxou*, water and electricity (natural assets) were not given to every household. Financial assets, such as savings, insurance and access to loans were often missing in the households, due to very little and often unstable income and lack of bank accounts. The families were

large and only a few members were usually employed. The families also often didn't send all or any of their children to school (human assets). On the other hand, there was quite a good network not only within the community, but also to outside NGOs and other Favelas (social assets). Physical assets, such as essential household items, and other goods are also important. It surprised me that no matter how bad the state of the houses and shacks, almost every household in the *Favela do Luxou* possessed a television, whereas refrigerators, to ensure the freshness of food, were not as common. Community-based assets like infrastructure (schools, clinics, NGOs) also contribute to resilience.

Thus, the various types of assets that a household might or might not have indicate what the family has to survive in times of crisis, and how resilient the household is to food and/or livelihood insecurity.

In *Favela do Luxou*, I learned that coping strategies and assets are important in determining the resilience of a household to food and/or livelihood insecurity. Food security is something I never had to think about, living in a perfect world in Switzerland. I came across poverty once I started to travel to and work in developing countries, but I only understood the intensity and extent of real struggle and hunger when I was actually experiencing it myself.

A Mismatch between Ecology and Economy?

The Cases of Rwanda and Costa Rica



Willy Mugenzi

Student, Rwanda

Willy Mugenzi graduated from the Rwandan Journalism and Mass Communication School.

At University, he was a columnist for the two university newspapers.

Later, he secured a job with Rwanda's only English daily,

The New Times,

where he served as a Journalist and Bureau Chief before starting

his current Master's in Media,

Conflict & Peace Studies

at the University for Peace.

He is a co-founder of Peace Watch.

As part of the post-Genocide generations,

he strongly believes that peace will not come unless it is peacefully waged for.

It cannot be served on a silver platter.

There is a close nexus between Ecology and Economy. Although I am not an expert in this field, my eyes have exposed me to the ugliest realities between nature and man. The latter destroys the former; and, the destruction of the former affects the latter, especially in the long run.

Rwanda is generally regarded as "the land of a thousand green hills." This reflects the beauty of Mother Nature in my homeland. However, human greed and grievance have left Rwanda's environment severely destroyed. The 1990-1994 war and Genocide not only affected human life, but also left scores of wild animals scared and scattered.

This is in contrast to the country that I currently call 'home'. In Costa Rica, even the minutest living organisms enjoy the highest spirit of tolerance and co-existence. At first, I was worried about the large dog population in my peaceful town and university campus in El Rodeo. We raised this topic in class, to discuss whether or not we should allow dogs on campus.

Since then, my perception of peace has gone beyond the notions of 'negative peace' and 'positive peace', as put forth by Johan Galtung. Denying animals their alienable right to exist is, by and large, a denial of peace. As such, since arriving at UPEACE, my definition of peace has become: 'Live and Let All Live'. Human and nonhuman beings alike.

In my home country, the growing popularity of commercial and mechanized agriculture has undermined the right of fauna and flora. Due to a lack of alternative energy, deforestation is the norm rather than the exception for domestic fuel consumption. Similarly, the dominant methods of farming continue to play a critical role in land

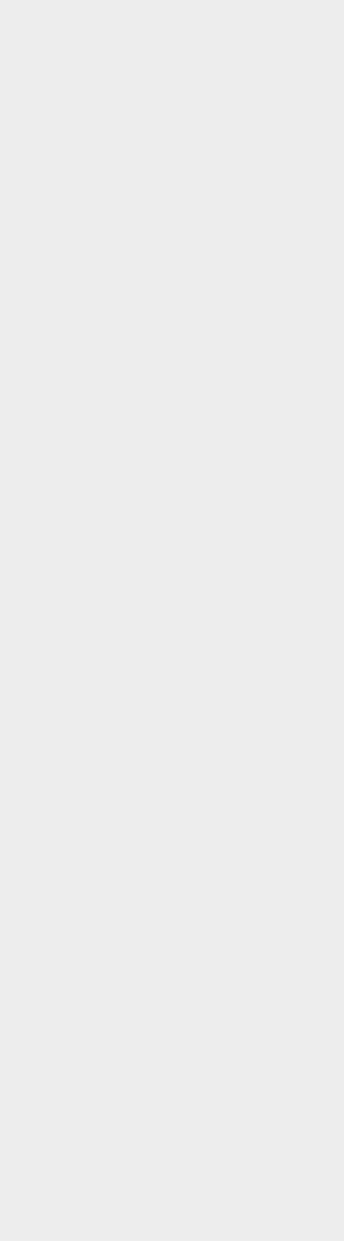
degradation. The capitalistic nature of man has given no room for the elephant grass to grow in the greener, swampy areas of the country. Swamps are continually getting leveled for the sake of rentable mansions -all in the name of urbanization and 'development'.

My fellow Africans, especially those from countries that are slowly becoming encroached by deserts, need to 'borrow a leaf' from Costa Rican when it comes to developing comprehensive environment management strategies. Our question, until now, has been: Can economic development harmoniously co-exist with environmental protection? If so, how?

Though Costa Rican environmental management strategies are impressive, this does not mean, however, that they are beyond reproach. During my time in Costa Rica, I have noticed that, although black plastic bags are said to be detrimental to the environment, their usage seems to be widespread in the country. This is one lesson that Costa Rica could learn from Rwanda, where the use of polythene bags is strictly forbidden, precisely in order to protect and preserve the environment.

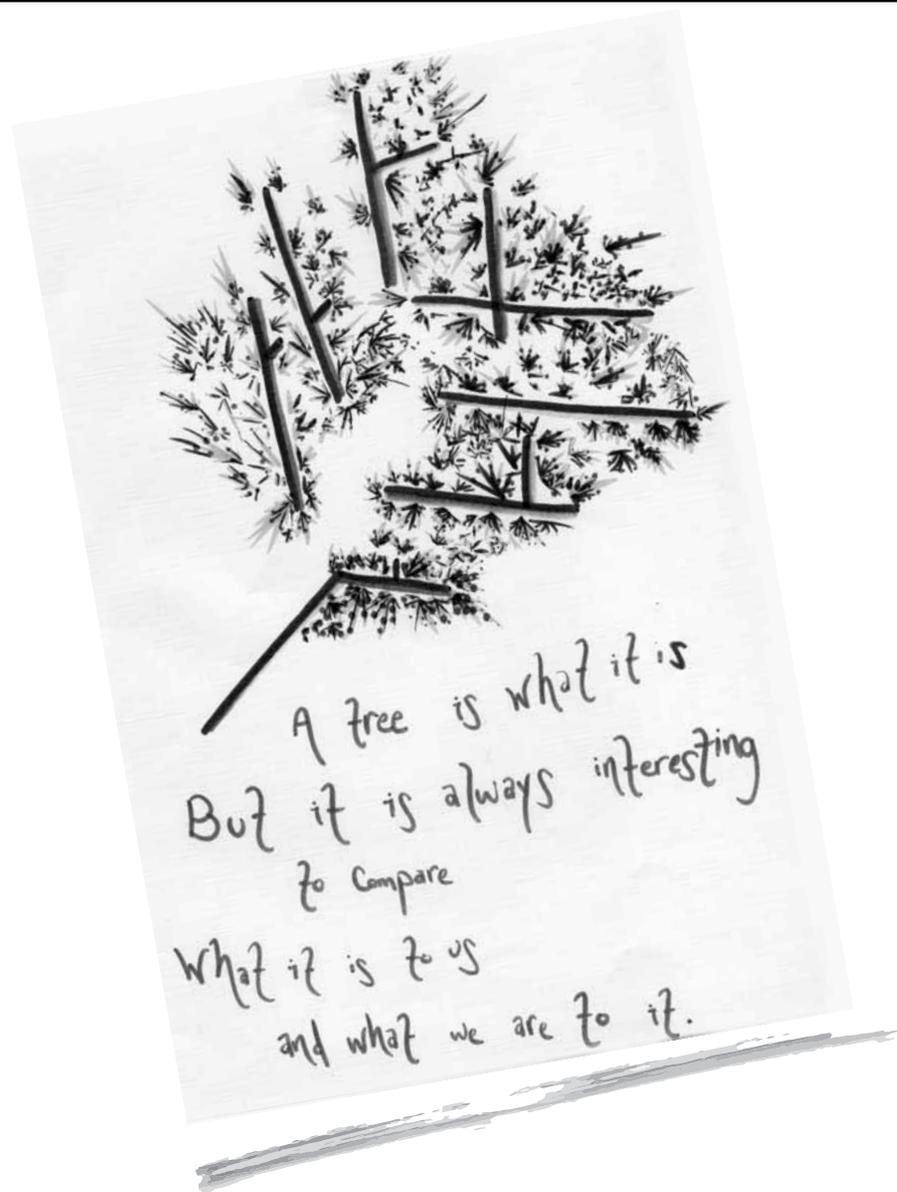
Likewise, Rwanda should learn a lesson or two from the Costa Rican style of housing. Despite being overpopulated and small in size compared to Costa Rica, housing developments in Rwanda are really quite scary. Financial-gigantism has led capitalists to build mega-houses to express their economic prowess. Meanwhile, in Costa Rica, smaller, more modest living situations seem to meet the needs of local inhabitants.

Overall, there are plentiful suggestions to this whole question of environmental preservation versus economic



development. Mine is simply to call for systematic thinking and learning from each other's experiences. The simple reason why the whole World is currently facing environmental challenges is because, at some point in time, there were a bunch of thinkers who believed that there is a big mismatch between ecology and economy. Yet, there is hope: what if another bunch of thinkers were to emerge, this time believing that these two concepts are complementary and interdependent? That, in fact, the reverse could be true?

Federico Chialvo





**George William
Kasekende**
Student, Uganda

*George William Kasekende
is a Ugandan Lawyer
and is currently pursuing
a Master's in International Law
and Settlement of Disputes
at the University for Peace
in Costa Rica.*

A Call to Action: The "Save the Mabira Forest" Campaign in Uganda

On March 9th, 2008, as Uganda joined the rest of the Commonwealth family to celebrate Commonwealth Day, whose theme in 2008 was 'Our Environment, Our Future', I couldn't help but remember the vicious scenes of violence that I witnessed in Kampala, exactly one year before. Two people were killed at a protest against the Ugandan government's plans to allocate 7,000 out of 28,000 hectares of Mabira Forest land to a sugar company. The two who died were of Asian descent. These mortalities occurred because the Sugar Corporation of Uganda Limited (SCOUL) - which is owned by the Mehta Group and wants to use part of Mabira Forest for economic gain - is Asian-owned.

Before setting off to attend the celebrations in London, His Excellency President Yoweri Museveni, who is the current Commonwealth Chairperson, released a letter entitled 'Protect the environment for future generations'. In this, he stated shortly that this year's theme is a reminder of the serious consequences of environmental degradation, as well as the collective responsibility to protect the environment. I do believe that my dear President may have good intentions for protecting the environment, but I urge him to act now and bring to a halt the contentious issue of giving away one-quarter of Mabira Forest to a company that intends to replace the forest with a sugarcane plantation, a low value commodity, at the expense of the future generations of Ugandans like myself.

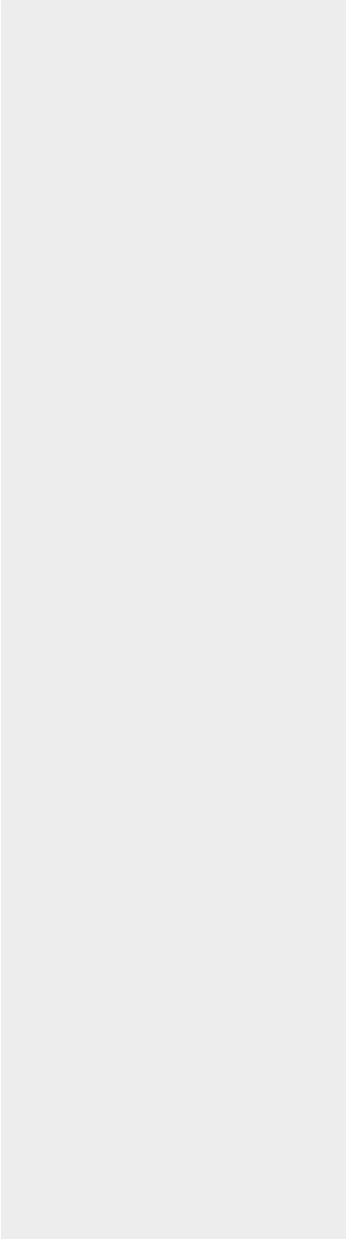
Mabira Forest is one of the biggest natural forests in Uganda, acting as a water catchment area for the Lake Victoria and Lake Kyoga basins. Lake Victoria is the largest fresh water lake in the world and the source of the Nile, one of the longest rivers in the world. Mabira Forest is also a source of many rivers within Uganda; it is home to many species of rare birds, plants, and animals; and, therefore, a boost to

eco-tourism in the country. The destruction of the forest will have unimaginable consequences for the millions of civilians and communities that depend on the surrounding areas for agriculture. The adverse effects on the environment, such as increased soil erosion into Lake Victoria and deforestation, will be inescapable.

SCOUL argues that the sugar plantation will benefit the Ugandan economy, since it addresses the prevailing sugar scarcity in Uganda, and shall contribute more revenue to the country's coffers. They contend that this project will improve infrastructure in Uganda and create thousands of jobs. They also claim that part of the forest is already degraded and has an 'inferior' type of trees, which cannot produce valuable timber anyway. It is important to note that these arguments are misleading because they don't take into consideration the long-term effects of such a project. In my humble opinion, if part of Mabira Forest is destroyed, three things will happen: Lake Victoria will dry up; agricultural production will become harsher; and, millions of people will be displaced.

I am disgustingly perturbed that, despite generous and openhanded land offers from the Buganda Kingdom, Masaka Diocese and some Districts in Northern Uganda in efforts to save the Mabira forest, SCOUL and the Mehta Group continue to arrogantly insist on the forest plan. This, in my opinion, is a substantially flawed deal for all Ugandans and the world as a whole. This project is an assault on the natural resources of Uganda as it negatively impacts the livelihood of the Ugandan population, creating unnecessary burdens that threaten the stability of the country.

Destroying one of Uganda's few remaining primary forests for sugar plantations - low-value industries at best - would be a significant loss to the current and future generations of



Ugandans, as well as a long-term setback to the ecological viability of the country. This primary forest cannot be re-grown, at least not in my lifetime or even in my children's and grandchildren's lifetime. It is basically irreplaceable, and once it disappears, it will effectively be gone for several generations of Ugandans to come.

It is within this context that I conclude by saying it's time for my dear President Museveni to do the right thing, especially in light of his commitment to protect the environment for future generations as stated in his above-mentioned letter! Uganda would be better served by President Museveni pushing for the conservation of native forests such as Mabira and the rehabilitation of the many existing deforested lands in Uganda, as opposed to giving the land away to unscrupulous investors.

As of March 10th 2008, no decision has been reached by the President or the Ugandan Parliament on whether to allocate the 7,000 hectares. Meanwhile, the 'Save the Mabira Forest' campaign is gaining momentum, with thousands of people sending in petitions.

Please sign the petition to save the Mabira Forest by accessing the link below to offer your much needed support:

<http://www.petitiontime.com/ViewPetition.aspx?key=savemabira>

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V. Community in Action



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Community Initiative in Red Sea State, Sudan



Amel Dehaib
Student, Sudan

Amel Dehaib's background is in Economics and Development Studies, and she will soon be finishing her M.A. in Gender and Peace Building at UPEACE. She has also been working for about ten years now with many international as well national NGOs in the field of community development across her home country, Sudan, as both an employee and a volunteer.

An Overview of East Sudan

East Sudan is one of the most marginalized and underdeveloped regions in Sudan. The region is characterized by a severe shortage in public services. Its population suffers from poor access to basic human needs, such as clean drinking water, health, food, and education. Health indicators show that the region faces one of the direst situations in all of sub-Saharan Africa.

This situation is further exacerbated by poor infrastructure, including roads, transportation, and other means of communication, which has kept most of the rural areas isolated from the rest of the country. Furthermore, the region has been hard-hit by a drought that started in the 1980s in the Sahel region. This has led to severe environmental degradation and the loss of livelihood sources, and has been particularly devastating for the communities in this region who are mostly pastoralist and semi-pastoralist.

As a development worker in international organizations, I have worked directly with communities in the region. Through these experiences, I have seen and felt firsthand the isolation and deprivation faced by East Sudan compared to other regions in the country. More particularly, I had the chance to spend some time in Tumalla - where I would be introduced to the community initiative described below - as part of a primary health care project implemented jointly by the World Bank and the state's Ministry of Health.

A Community Initiative with the Beja People

The Beja people are the original inhabitants of East Sudan and one of the oldest ethnic groups in Africa. As the Beja mainly inhabit rural areas, they have suffered a lot from

'development' policies, as well as from environmental degradation. As a result, the majority of the Beja have been displaced to Port Sudan, the capital city of the region. There, they live in shanty areas around the city; feel socially excluded; assume the lowest paying jobs; and, generally, are forced to live under the poverty line.

More than ten years back, there was a man who made a real difference in the lives of the Beja people in one of the localities called Rify Elgunub. He is of Beja descent, and had become an engineer in the United Arab Emirates. He was very concerned about the living conditions of his people back home and about how their life conditions might be improved. This man decided to sacrifice 'the good life' he was enjoying in the Emirates, and to return back to his village. This decision was made out of a desire to move beyond personal interest and to work for a greater cause: the common good.



Water, the Source of Life

The Beja people called this man Shiek Tumolaa - 'Shiek' referring to being a Muslim leader and 'Tumolaa' being the

name of his village. The Shiek set out to resolve the water issue first, as people in this area used to buy water from the city at a very high price that they could not afford. The water was very unhygienic, and the Beja had very little access to it, leading to health problems such as kidney failure, water-related diseases, and even high mortality rates. This situation also forced so many to be displaced to the shanty areas in the city, simply to have access to water. The Shiek seemed to diagnose the problems faced by his community well and believed that water would be the key to life for his people and their development.

The Shiek started by using his own money and expertise, and succeeded in digging a well that provided safe drinking water not only to his village, but also to a number of surrounding villages. Families from nearby villages soon started to move closer to Tumolaa to have regular access to drinking water. The Beja people declared this to be somewhat of a miracle. It had always been believed that water in Tumolaa was destined to be salty and undrinkable as the area is near the Red Sea. Therefore, witnessing the success of this community initiative, the Beja claimed that God must have been performing miracles through Shief Tumolaa - which is why his name, until today, signifies 'Muslim Leader of Tumolaa'.

Education, the Key to Sustainability

Shiek Tumolaa then opened the first Madrassa (religion school), knowing that communities in Eastern Sudan are very closely linked to their religion (Islam). Parents soon started sending their children to the Madrassa, in which the Sheikh was teaching not only religion lessons, but also other issues related to their life and development. Interestingly, the Sheikh was able to smoothly convince the community to send girls to the Madrassa. The community is very conservative about sending girls for education, but the Shiek was able to show that girls' education is important for the lives of the general community and not only for the girls.

Soon after, the Sheikh mobilized community members to build an elementary school along with the Madrassa. Now, both girls and boys are enrolling in secondary and high school in the city. The Shiek also mobilized local community stakeholders to build more infrastructures, including water source pipes. He also encouraged the local community to grow communal vegetable gardens and cultivate a variety of crops, for which they developed water management plans on how the water would be used.

As a result, Tumolaa currently has two basic schools, a health center with trained midwives, good water resources, adult education classes, as well as a community garden. These are all run by and for the community. The whole village was also tree planted and, today, continues to stand out as a lush, green garden in the middle of a huge desert. This has attracted and encouraged villagers from other surrounding villages to join this community and settle down in Tumolaa. As a result, migration and internal displacement from this area to urban cities has stopped, as the local Beja inhabitants have been able to find a dignified life for themselves in their home area.

Giving Meaning to One's Life

Now, international organizations are approaching the Shiek in a move to support his efforts. The government has also offered to provide some support. Beja community members in this area claim that their life has been dramatically transformed, and they have regained hope for a decent life. They attribute this transformation to the leadership style of Shiek Tomolaa. Having been based in Tumolaa for some time, I had the opportunity to talk to the community and to the Shiek - I was so inspired and touched by his initiative, and felt that what the Shiek did exemplified the way one can give meaning to her/his life. It is the Shiek's belief in what he is doing, as well as his voluntary, humble, and kind spirit, that has touched the lives of so many Beja people, and which will undoubtedly continue to touch the lives of so many more Beja to come.



Birta Vidarsdottir
Intern, Iceland

Birta Vidarsdottir has spent the last six years studying abroad in Hong Kong, the U.S.A. and Argentina. She is currently working with Professor Mohit Mukherjee on marketing and fundraising for the Centre for Executive and Professional Education. She envisions a future in Peace Education.

It took 33 hours to reach the other side of the world. Then there I was, one of 250 high school students from 67 countries, living on a tiny campus on the outskirts of Hong Kong.¹⁶ At first, it was intimidating, but my fear did not last long: how could a community united by the mission of achieving international peace and understanding inspire anything but trust and acceptance? The place was surreal, the people amazing.



Upon our arrival, around 120 of us, the newly arrived first year students, congregated in a small classroom in front of the headmaster. The latter, in a loud voice, announced that we were special because we were chosen, and chosen because we were special - it did not even occur to us that this could be a circular fallacy. "You are the world's future leaders," he proclaimed, as if it were a certain, undisputed truth.

The young, promising students in front of him quickly formed an 'international community', united by a sense of higher purpose and personal empowerment. We were provided with a vision; a philosophy so enticing that each and every one of us bought into it, although some naturally adopted this vision with more idealist fervor than others.

The idea behind UWC, reinforced by our experience there, was that each one of us could make a difference. Each one of us could take initiative towards the betterment of our community, or the world for that matter, and the rest would

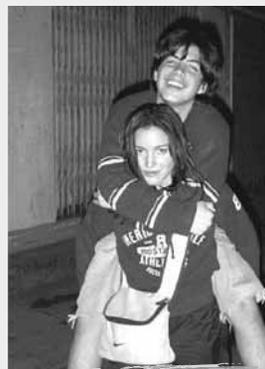


simply run to our aid. All of a sudden, the world did not seem that big anymore and things could be brought under control!

The teachers were also from all over the world. The class room experience was participatory and dynamic, enriching in so many ways... but nothing could compare to our monthly Cultural

¹⁶The first UWC ever created was the Atlantic College in the UK in 1962, as an initiative of the German educationalist Kurt Hahn who was fascinated by the dialogues between the representatives of former enemy countries working together under NATO. Since 1995, her Majesty Queen Noor of Jordan has served as the President of the United World Colleges with Nelson Mandela as the Honorary President. There are currently 10 UWC campuses around the world, in countries including Costa Rica, Canada, India, Norway, South Africa and Venezuela.

¹⁷Quan Cai' is Chinese for 'Whole Education' - High academic standards are balanced by opportunities for personal development. A part of the College's extra curricular program is left open each year to be run by students. The learning process of identifying a genuine need, designing a program or activity to meet that need, and evaluating its implementation (whether successful or not), is vital in acquiring the confidence to promote authentic change. In the words of Nelson Mandela: "The virtue and the strength of UWC is that it provides small but powerful cells of innovation, catalysts for change, breaking barriers of habit and opening up broader vistas of experience for both pupils and educationalists" (The LPC UWC Website - <http://www.lpcuwc.uwc.org>)



Evenings covering every region of the world; the 'Quan Cai' activities program¹⁷; China Week; Project Week; or, our Christmas vacation trips where we got to roam free and independent around South-East Asia. The College saw it as its mission to form a community of pro-active students with the confidence to take initiative in shaping their environment and finding opportunities for personal growth that lead to wisdom, peace, and happiness.

One would race out of a Kung Fu class to an International Cooking class. And, when the fire alarm went off, as it habitually did when we were cooking, the fire trucks would arrive. Some would quickly escape to an African dance rehearsal for the African cultural evening coming up in a week, while others would prepare the weekly newsletter. There were kayaking excursions, a coral monitoring activity, camping trips, painting classes for non-artists, musical sessions, an improvisational theatre group, football and basketball tournaments - in short, every activity we could think of and get more than two people to join. In the evenings, students would gather in the Common Rooms for midnight noodles and group study projects; during weekends, we would sneak out of campus down to the beach after hours, lighting a bonfire and playing music.

There were also various service-oriented activities, like horseback riding for handicapped children, environmental action clubs working on the outskirts of the city, and English tutoring at local high schools. The options for community involvement seemed almost endless in this tiny community of only 250 students, and most activities were coordinated and led by students for students, although fully supported by the teachers who lived with us on campus.

There was so much activism and so many initiatives. One event that I will never forget - it was when four Israeli girls and a Palestinian boy decided to give a presentation on the Israel-Palestine conflict to the rest of the community. They started out well, but the stories each of them had learnt

while growing up were completely incompatible. Over and over, they would get frustrated hearing one another's stories. But, then, they would force themselves to admit as the other side interrupted that, if they did not agree, neither side could claim to know anything for a fact. The presentation was just as confusing as it was enlightening. It was the Socratic lesson where the wise is the one who knows s/he knows nothing - a common baseline to be acknowledged before we could begin building 'international understanding'.



I remember China week in the first year when the teachers led groups of students to different places in China. My group headed towards the city of Shaoguan in western China. It was not a well-known tourist destination like the China Wall; on the contrary, our focus was on experiencing real life. We spent a day with local farmers, harvesting nuts; another day at a steel factory; and yet another day experiencing the life of Chinese soldiers at an army training camp. We visited a local primary school to help out with English lessons for a day; later, we improvised a cultural show at the local university. We visited local markets; played games on every mode of transportation we took; and, over traditional Chinese dinners, brainstormed a hundred ways chopsticks could come in handy.

It was very difficult to leave after our two years at UWC came to an end. We thought we would never see each other again; that nothing would be the same. In our minds, the community was disintegrating.

However, three months later, I showed up at Middlebury College, in the middle of nowhere, Vermont, USA. The first two people I met were a couple, today married, a Hungarian girl and a Macedonian guy. They were the recent alumni of the UWC in Norway and introduced me to alumni of the United World Colleges of Singapore, Italy, the USA, Canada, UK, India and Swaziland. Over the next few years, I met many of my best friends from Hong Kong; there are countless UWC reunions happening all around the world; and, meanwhile, online UWC networks continue to proliferate.



Later, while traveling through the Balkans on a Peace and Conflict Resolution trip organized by the American University, I heard about the new UWC being built in Bosnia. This UWC brings to one place Bosnian Muslim, Bosnian Serb, and Bosnian Croat students who have been studying in separate school systems since the Balkan war ended in 1995. It is a promising peace education experiment in a country still divided after a civil war. During my time at UPEACE, I also got to meet a number of students from the new UWC of Costa Rica. They came to participate in our Model United Nations Conference, amazing everyone with their drive and passion.

You may know that feeling that sometimes arises when you meet your fellow countrymen after being abroad for a long time. It's a mix of recognition, nostalgia, and trust -at Middlebury, right in the beginning, I could tell which students had gone to UWC. We had never met before, but we had a culture in common- we were a community, almost a nation on our own. Then again, UPEACE is not far from a UWC- my emotions upon entering the UPEACE campus for the first time were like coming home after four years abroad.



Eddy Quesada

*Administrative Assistant,
Costa Rica*

*Eddy Quesada has been working
at UPEACE for six years.*

*During these years, he has met a
lot of different people from many
countries and continents, includ-
ing Africa, the U.S.A., Canada,
Russia, Japan, China, Kyrgyzstan,
and Latin America.*

*Sometimes, Eddy still receives
news from them.*

*When new students arrive at
UPEACE,
they tend to come and ask where
the 'Mafia' of UPEACE is.*

*They claim that someone in their
home country had told them to
ask for Eddy, as he will help out
with anything that they need.*

*This is very important for Eddy,
because it means that he has
made their studies in Costa Rica
just a little bit more fun and less
difficult, just like any true friend
would.*

Eddy Quesada is known around campus for being the 'jokester' - for making all those around him laugh or crack a smile, at the very least. Here is a series of humorous moments that Eddy shared with us from his time at UPEACE. Enjoy!

More rice and beans, anyone?

A student once came to my office, and asked me to call his landlord. He told me that his host family had been feeding him nothing but rice and beans - three times a day, seven days a week. I tried to explain to him that this is typical Costa Rican fare, but I also called the landlord and asked him to try to switch up the menu once in a while. Soon after, the student came back to my office. I asked him if he was enjoying a little more variety in his diet, and he simply replied that: "Oh boy, am I ever! I get one more slice of meat to wash down the rice and beans, thank you very much!"

¿Hablas Spanglish?

I was once sitting in the cafeteria, eating lunch with a group of my UPEACE colleagues. Suddenly, a student approached me, and in his best Spanish, asked me: "¡Hola Eddy! ¿Cuales son las mejores nightclub donde podría salir esta noche? I know you'd be the best one to ask!"

My colleagues looked at me, not quite knowing what to say. I patted the student on the back, and told him that nightclub in Spanish means 'strip club', not 'dancing venue'. The student turned bright red, and set off to brush up his good ol' Spanish skills after that!

An Unusual Package

A package once arrived for a student, and I really started to wonder what was inside. It smelled really bad, and the

Community Comedy Hour with Eddy Quesada

student had been complaining for some time about missing her favorite foods from back home. She opened the package in front of me, and low and behold - her family had sent her a fish in the post. And, crawling on it, was a worm - still alive and well after the long commute!

Breathe - Smile -and then Freak Out!

A lot of students tend to pass by my office while waiting for their visas to be processed. Many complain that the visa application procedure runs on 'Latino time', but I am always armed and ready with the same response: you simply have to apply early and wait your turn - that's the way life goes.

I particularly remember one student who came to my office after her visa was rejected to go to the Philippines. She was crying, and I simply said to her: "Breathe, smile, and then freak out." She actually did manage to smile and still thanks me to this day for reminding her that, no matter what, life will go on. Even in Latino time.

Insider Info

Ever wonder how Eddy can remember the names of all those on campus? How he called you by your first name even before you were introduced? Well, Eddy revealed his little secret: yes, he is naturally good with names, but he also spends months looking through student applications (including photos!) during the application process. He then secretly enjoys freaking students out during their first day on campus, when he enthusiastically calls out their first name from behind.

One of the Most Beautiful Places on Earth!



Kaley Lachapelle
Student, Canada

Kaley Lachapelle is a graduate candidate in International Law at the University for Peace. She is passionate about cultural learning, travel, sustainable ecotourism, and volunteering. Kaley is excited to pursue a career that will allow her to make a positive difference in the lives of others across the globe.

February 3, 2008

I feel so refreshed and inspired! I just spent some of the best days of my time in Costa Rica on a trip to see my friends Geovanny and Giselle in a small town called Bajo del Tigre.

I met Geovanny and Giselle on my first trip to Pacuare Lodge with my family in December 2007. Geovanny was one of our canopy tour guides - his smile calmed all of us down, as we were quite nervous on our first zip line. He didn't say much, but his nature made him unforgettable to all of us. I met Giselle the morning we went rafting. I guess it was fate that we were delayed a few hours as the delay gave me the opportunity to sit and talk with her. She invited me to come visit her in her town, Bajo del Tigre. Many of the workers at Pacuare Lodge come from the town, including Geovanny. They hike in and out from the lodge every day along a rigorous trail. I told Giselle I would definitely take her up on her offer - I don't know if she believed that I really would.

I returned to Pacuare Lodge ten days later with a friend for New Year's Eve. I had the pleasure of seeing Giselle and Geovanny again, although only for a short period of time as it is difficult to chat when they are on the job. We invited Geovanny to share some wine and conversation before he headed home for the night and he happily took us up on our offer. I told him that I would definitely try to make it to Bajo del Tigre... again, I know he hoped that I would but probably doubted that I could make it.

When I found out that I had a couple of days off at the end of January, I immediately called Geovanny to tell him that I was coming to visit. He was worried about getting time off as I was coming during the high season for the tourism

industry. Luckily, however, his manager was happy to help out as he knew me personally from my first stay at the Lodge. The relationships I created on my trips to the Lodge during my holiday break would prove invaluable over the course of my three-day trip in January.

On Thursday, January 31st, I left my house at 1 p.m., took a bus to San Jose, a taxi to another terminal, got the last ticket for the bus leaving at 2 p.m., and hopped on the bus for Turrialba. There I caught the 4 p.m. bus leaving for Santa Marta and one hour later met Geovanny who was waiting to accompany me on the hike down the mountain to his town. We arrived in Bajo del Tigre after an hour trek down a steep and bumpy dirt road that I wouldn't recommend for any car that isn't four wheel drive!

When we arrived, I met Geovanny's two sisters, his brother, and his mom. We spent the evening in his house eating, talking, and looking at photos. Geovanny's little three-year-old sister absolutely adores him, so she wanted to do everything with us that night. Geovanny, who has helped raise her, really displays a level of care for her that I've never seen in a



man his age. The bond between all family members is truly beautiful. It was a great, relaxing evening in the quiet town of Bajo del Tigre in the Costa Rican jungle.

We woke up to rain on Friday morning. All the paths and roads are dirt around the town, since it is in the middle of the rainforest, and everything had turned to mud. Finally, at 10 a.m. we decided that we could not wait any longer; it was time to explore! We had no rain jackets so we agreed to just get wet. It was a chilly start to the hike but the rain eventually stopped and so it became more enjoyable, especially when we made it through all the mud and got to the waterfall. For two hours we hiked along a creek adorned with numerous waterfalls. I sure found it slippery on the rocks. Geovanny, of course, had no problem since he grew up climbing and playing in the water. The "20-minute" walk to the two largest waterfalls actually took us two hours! (That did, however, include stopping to take many photos.)

After a nice dip in the brisk pool at the bottom of one of the falls, we headed back up to the town. We were super dirty and cold, so we rinsed off our feet and I put on all of the warm clothes I had brought with me! (I'm talking fleece sweater and long pants!) I couldn't bear to shower in cold water so I decided to just settle for a few bad hair days. We ate lunch, had a siesta and then headed off to tour the town.

While the town has only a small population, it is spread out across a huge amount of land. It is an interesting town -it goes to sleep at 8 or 9 p.m. and is up by 4:30 or 5 a.m. It has a very small shop, or 'pulperia', inside someone's home. I was surprised that they have potable water and electricity given the remote nature of the town. The main industry is tourism and cilantro cultivation. Everyone is related to one another, apart from Giselle's family! The houses are humble and mostly have tin roofs with walls that don't reach the roof. Many people live in one house and there is no privacy - you just get used to hearing everyone in the bathroom! Bugs easily enter the house -including scorpions- and snakes

sometimes get in too. I have to admit, this part of the experience really freaked me out. I was terrified I'd wake up with a venomous snake in my bed! But when you're in Bajo del Tigre, you really become one with nature. You have no choice in the matter, really.

After our little town tour we headed to Giselle's house. Her mom hand-made tortillas for us, we bought some sausage, and had rice and salad for dinner. It was delicious. Geovanny brought over a sufficient quantity of beer and so the party got started. We decided to play a card game and needed some form of penalty for the loser of each round. We sent Geovanny's brother off to buy some Guarro (a hard alcohol typical of Costa Rica). As we neared the end of the first bottle, we had to call the shop owners to ask them to open their store so we could buy two more bottles. This was around 9 p.m. and they were already going to sleep - some good negotiation skills were definitely needed to allow us to continue with the fun. The party was inevitably a good time for all involved. We played some reggaeton music that the pet toucan, Tori, apparently loved since he started singing along. The night ended around 11:30 or midnight. We stumbled back to Geovanny's and were sound asleep until 5:30 a.m. when it was time wake up and get ready for work.

I am so lucky to have met such awesome people during my travels at Christmas. Although relatively speaking they have few material goods, everyone in Bajo del Tigre is very giving and kind. It is really inspiring. I admire all of them so much and am so happy to have become their friends. They work very hard but don't get stressed and complain very little. They have the greatest attitudes

They also expressed happiness with my friendship. My friend Giselle was thrilled that we had become friends because we come from completely different socio-economic and educational backgrounds. I'm a city girl (though I love nature) and she's a rural girl who never wants to live in the city (though she loves going out dancing!) She was happy



citizens/employees with a salary and lifestyle that they truly deserve. If you're interested in helping me develop such a project, let me know! This was definitely an eye-opening, fun, and exciting three days. I feel so blessed for all the opportunities that I have had presented to me. I can't wait to go back and visit my friends. I wanted to share this experience with you because it has meant so much to me.

Qué Bonita es esta Vida (Life is so Beautiful)

Kaley

that our differences didn't prevent me from wanting to get to know her - I guess when you're in the tourism industry, the clients rarely make an effort to get to know the staff and often do not treat them with much respect. I could tell that those who hadn't met me were a bit suspicious of me when they saw me in the town. They didn't know what kind of person I was and were hesitant in their actions around me. But as they got to know me, they became more at ease and we ended up having a wonderful time together.

I must say that I am saddened that Geovanny could never finish high school because he had to start working to support his family. I am inspired by the initiative he takes to learn English, carrying a notebook with him to work and writing down new words and phrases that he learns on a daily basis. I wish I could do something to help him finish his schooling and get trained to work on the river, which is what he really would like to do. He is such a wonderful individual and deserves the opportunity to excel.

When I finish at UPEACE, I would like to look into developing a sustainable (environmentally and economically) business in Bajo del Tigre to help employ the town and to provide the

Living the Earth Charter



**Marcos Estrada
de Oliveira**
Student, Brazil

Marcos Estrada de Oliveira is a Master's student in the Peace Education program at the University for Peace. He spent the first 21 years of his life in the city of Valinhos, State of Sao Paulo, Brazil, but has also lived in four different countries in the last six years: Spain, Italy, England, and Costa Rica. During his studies in London, he was part of the Sustainability Team at Kingston University, and since 2005, he has been contributing to a socio-environmental consultancy firm with development projects in Brazil.

Until January 2007, I had been searching to find globally shared values and principles for promoting a better world. Until that time, the Earth Charter was still unknown to me. The fact that the Earth Charter came into being through a large grassroots-level consultation process inspired me to adopt it as a guiding framework for positive change. The first Principle of the Earth Charter particularly means a lot to me: 'Respect and Care for the Community of Life' implies holding values that are necessary for a better world.

After I personally endorsed it, I felt compelled to disseminate the Earth Charter around Kingston University in London, where I was studying at the time. I also felt inspired to write an article in a newspaper about the importance of the Earth Charter as a pedagogical tool, particularly within the framework of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development.



When I was accepted to the University for Peace, I saw an opportunity to actively contribute to the Earth Charter Secretariat that is based here. In fact, my Master's research project is focused on studying the impact of one of the Earth

Charter's pedagogical materials on primary education in Costa Rica. I have visited many primary schools across the country, and spoken with teachers and students about the value of incorporating the Earth Charter into the classroom. This research has given me the opportunity to reach out to my own local community in Ciudad Colon and El Rodeo, as well to see how these pedagogical materials are making a big difference in many communities across the country.

Finally, the Earth Charter has also come to shape my personal life: it is a framework for personal growth and inspiration. It has been a great experience to meet individuals from different parts of the world through the Earth Charter network. We share some of the same goals and values, and through the Charter, we have the opportunity to exchange unique experiences and wrap our heads around some of the world's problems. Thus, on an academic, social, and even personal level, the Earth Charter has become an important part of my everyday life, as a source of inspiration for carrying on in my efforts to affect positive change in the world around me.



Caring for the Community of Life, a Personal Journey



Abelardo Brenes

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Abelardo is Special Advisor to Earth Charter International; an Independent Consultant; and Member of the Monitoring and Evaluation Expert Group at the Secretariat of the U.N. Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, UNESCO. Abelardo has directed several projects in Central America for UPEACE, the most recent of which was the Central American Programme for a Culture of Peace and Democracy (1995-2001). He was also Director of the M.A. in Peace Education at UPEACE from September 2004 to August 2006. Abelardo was a member of the drafting committee of the Earth Charter from 1998 to 2000.

Introduction

I consider *Earth Charter* principle 2, “Care for the community of life with understanding, compassion, and love” as the heart of the Charter and also its most significant pedagogical rationale. It has implicit the possibility of realizing the potential of the principle of universal responsibility—as stated in paragraph five of the Preamble—by providing a rationale for applying this principle differentially, as stated in complementary principle 2b:

2b. Affirm that with increased freedom, knowledge, and power comes increased responsibility to promote the common good.

Central to this rationale is the evocative power of sub-principle 16f, which states the Charter’s peace concept:

16f. Recognize that peace is the wholeness created by right relationships with oneself, other persons, other cultures, other life, Earth, and the larger whole of which all are a part.

This principle opens significant potentials for developing a holistic integrative pedagogical rationale, through which the positive psychological potentials and needs of learners for a sense of belongingness to a vital community of life, can provide the direction and energy for reaching a common understanding of the implications of living with a consciousness of respect and care for the community of life. I believe this requires personal and collective reflection and dialogue on the implications of the Charter’s vision of human development in paragraph four of the Preamble:

We must realize that when basic needs have been met, human development is primarily about being more, not having more.

In sum, the principles of universal and differential responsibility; Principle 2; the Charter’s peace concept, and its view human develop are the five most personally significant core elements. The purpose of this paper is to share some key moments of my experience as a member of the communities of UPEACE, the *Earth Charter* drafting committee, and the *Earth Charter Initiative’s* international community which may be of interest for appreciating this rationale in theory and praxis.

Given the limitations of space, the interested reader can obtain further information about my view of the significance of the principle of universal responsibility in Brenes (2002a) and the relationship between it and the principal of differential responsibility in Brenes (2005).

The contributions of peace and environmental psychology to understanding human responsibility are developed in Brenes & Winter (2001). Information on the pedagogical implications of these five principles can be found in Brenes (2004) and in Brenes (2006). Finally, current thinking on the ‘beingness’ dimension of personal development and the Charter is presented in Brenes (2008).

The Seeking the True Meaning of Peace Conference and the Declaration of Human Responsibilities for Peace and Sustainable Development

When, in the beginning of the 1980’s wars started to break-out in El Salvador and Nicaragua, I joined the Quaker

sponsored *Friends Peace Center*, based in San José, Costa Rica. It was devoted to supporting solidarity movements throughout Central America and also counteracting efforts from some parties for Costa Rica to become a second front against the Sandinista Regime in Nicaragua.

In 1987 the Esquipulas Peace Accords were signed. A new period of peaceful resolution of the violent conflicts in Central America ensued. However, I felt a deep restlessness, because the dimension of negative 'peace' that was being achieved served to justify almost anything in its name. I recall, for example, a *Gran Prix for Peace* in La Guácima, Costa Rica.

That year I joined the University for Peace (UPEACE) as a volunteer and received authorization to organize a seminar on the Buddhist approach to peace. The acceptance of our invitation to be the keynote speaker on the part of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the support of Costa Rican President Oscar Arias, gave impetus to this project and it evolved into an international conference in 1989, entitled *Seeking the True Meaning of Peace*. Almost 700 people participated and there was also a parallel children's conference. In addition, a public inter-faith mass was held at the national *Basilica de los Angeles*, in Cartago, Costa Rica; seven faiths participated, including the Dalai Lama, the Archbishop of the Catholic Church of the time and a shaman of the Bribri indigenous people from Talamanca, Costa Rica. The two main themes of the mass were 'compassion' and 'celebration'. The former was brought to life by a circle of banners with the names of children who had died in wars, which circled the Basilica and was organized by Patricia Montandon, of Children as Peacemakers Foundation.

A Proceedings book was published (Brenes, 1991) and a video documentary entitled *Seeking the True Meaning of Peace* was produced by the Gandhi Center of Communications at UPEACE. Many people have commented that this event sent ripples that inspired much work and collaboration throughout the 90s.

Jointly with the Foreign Ministry of the Government of Costa Rica, we drafted a *Declaration on Human Responsibilities for Peace and Sustainable Development* with the intention of using it as a working document and as an outcome statement of that Conference. That same year the Declaration was presented by the Government of Costa Rica to the General Assembly of the United Nations as document A/44/626. In May of 1990, President Oscar Arias and Environment Minister Alvaro Umaña signed Executive Decree No. 19682–MIRENEM, which states:

Article 1. To welcome, in all its implications, the Declaration of Human Responsibilities for Peace and Sustainable Development, adopted by the Seeking the True Meaning of Peace Conference, as an instrument for reflection and commitment.

The final Declaration articulated the Buddhist principle of universal responsibility with the global challenges as we saw them in those days. A quote of one of its articles is relevant to appreciate the relationship which we saw between universal responsibility and caring for the community of life with understanding, love and compassion.

Article 7. Of all living creatures, human beings have the unique capacity to decide consciously whether they protect or harm the quality and conditions of life on Earth. In reflecting on the fact that they belong to the natural world and occupy a special position as participants in the evolution of natural processes, people can develop, on the basis of selflessness, compassion and love, a sense of universal responsibility towards the world as an integral whole, towards the protection of nature and the promotion of the highest potential for change, with a view to creating those conditions which will enable them to achieve the highest level of spiritual and material well-being.

This articulation of universal responsibility derives from Mahayana Buddhism's assumption of universal compassion as a prime motivating value for human development. This motivation, coupled with an understanding of the interdependence of all phenomena, has been the cornerstone of the educational model that I have been developing over this 20 year time span.

Peace Education in Central America in the nineties

Using the *Declaration of Human Responsibilities* as an educational framework, I had an opportunity to continue collaborating with the University for Peace during the nineties in two major peace education programs in Central America sponsored by the governments of the sub-region. Within these programs we developed a *Integral Model of Education for Peace, Democracy and Sustainable Development*, using the *Declaration* as a framework.

Our pedagogical orientation was inspired by research and seminars which UPEACE carried-out during that period on the "peace zone" concept, which provided a foundation for the 1990 *Declaration of Puntarenas*, in which the Central American presidents stated: "...interpreting the aspirations of the Central American peoples, we declare the Isthmus as a Region of Peace, Freedom, Democracy and Development." This notion of 'aspiration' has played a key educational role in my work, which has followed the rationale that if people are given the opportunity to understand the nature of the violence and authoritarianism that they have experienced, realizing that it is not inevitable, and to recognize that they have powers to envision aspirations to live in peace, this can be a solid starting point for a process of transformation based on the empowerment of their aspirations by generating corresponding values, norms and life practices (see Brenes 2004).

Within this political context, the governments of the region also acknowledged that the *University for Peace* could

provide a significant contribution in the post-war reconstruction phase that was beginning to emerge. In our work we assumed that if Central America could take on its collective responsibility to develop its potential as a region characterized by values such as peace, responsible freedom, democracy and development of its human potential, then it could contribute substantially to forge a planetary civilization of peace and sustainability, which we interpreted as a fundamental challenge for our generation.

Thus, in 1992 the *European Community* supported the *University for Peace* to develop a *Program for the Promotion of Human Rights and Peace Education in Central America*. This provided a first opportunity to design the *Integral Model of Peace Education*, inspired by the *Declaration of Human Responsibilities for Peace and Sustainable Development*. Appraising this initiative as successful, the Government of Nicaragua proposed to the other Central American governments to invite the *University for Peace* to carry-out a more ambitious program. In 94, the *Culture of Peace and Democracy in Central America Program* was launched by the *University for Peace*.

The Program's objectives were:

- To contribute to the development of a Culture of Peace in the area, incorporating patterns of dialogue, respect, tolerance and social responsibility.
- To promote the development of values and behaviors that make possible peaceful human relations and the respect for human rights, in the framework of the ethnic and cultural diversity that characterize the region.
- To contribute to the establishment of consensus-building opportunities between institutions and persons that were representative of diverse tendencies of opinion in each country.

- To produce bridges for interchange and joint action between diverse organizations that promote integration, sustainable development and a culture of peace.

National Advisory Councils, with representatives of diverse social sectors, were created in each country to provide orientation for the program. They also served as democratic contexts that facilitated processes of dialogue on difficult and complex issues.

With the participation of the National Councils, about fifteen communities throughout Central America were identified for the development of the community component of the program. These communities had either been involved in the wars within some of the countries or had traditions of violence, suffered socio-economic exclusion and diverse social and developmental problems. The Program's philosophy was to support these communities, through local councils, by means of diverse educational and cultural activities and then to disseminate those practices that had exemplary educational value to broader sectors, particularly through the action of another key component of the program: communicators and journalists.

The underlying pedagogical rationale was to promote in public opinion consciousness of a fundamental personal and collective desideratum which all Central American countries faced: we could either continue ignoring the situations of structural violence or we could dialogically **understand** the deep historical roots of the violent conflicts and break-out of the vicious cycles of violence by listening deeply to the voices of the morally excluded with **compassion** and **love**. This desideratum was contextualized within the context of our global challenges and the **principles of universal and differential responsibility**. Once the Charter was available in the year 2000, it was used as the main framework for this purpose (see Brenes & Rojas, 2002; Brenes, 2004).

The results of the Program were positively appraised by the Central American governments in 1996. As a result, a mandate was given to the University for Peace to execute a second four-year phase of the Program, from 1997 to May 2001.

More detailed information about the Central American Culture of Peace Program is available in Brenes (1992a), Brenes (1995), Brenes (1996), Brenes (1997), and Brenes (2002a). Essays on education for universal responsibility are found in Brenes (1990), Brenes & Gang (1990), Brenes (1992b), Brenes (1992c) and Brenes, Ito & The Project 'Preparedness for Peace' (1994). The Integral Model is explained in Brenes (2004); its presentation as a three volume set of ten modules adapted for popular education is available in Brenes & Rojas (2002); finally there is a publication available which synthesizes the experience of applying it with journalists and the good news concept (Brenes, Navarro, & Román, 2002).

Sharing this praxis in the drafting process and use of *The Earth Charter*

In 1998, on the basis of my previous work with the *Declaration of Human Responsibilities* and the educational applications based on it, Mirian Vilela & Steven Rockefeller, Coordinator of the drafting committee of *The Earth Charter*, invited me to join this group. This provided an opportunity to link the 'principle of universal responsibility' to the key challenges for the XXIst Century which had been identified throughout the series of United Nations world conferences and summits during the 1990s.

Besides contributing the paragraph on 'Universal Responsibility' for the Preamble, I also had the privilege of making a significant contribution to Principle 2. A joint meeting between the *IUCN Working Group on Ethics and Jurisprudence and the Drafting Committee of the Earth*

Charter was held at the Hastings Center, New York, June 7-9, 1999. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the relationship between Benchmark Draft 2 of the Charter and IUCN's *Draft Covenant on Environment and Development*. In Benchmark Draft 2, principle 2 stated: "Care for the community of life in all of its diversity". There was also a principle 7, which stated: "Treat all living beings with compassion, and protect them from cruelty and wanton destruction." The representative of the Inuit people said that principle 7 was not acceptable to them, because their livelihood depended on hunting and fishing. An insurmountable obstacle for consensus seemed imminent. I suggested that we take compassion out of principle 7 and bring it into principle 2, given that it is of such fundamental importance. The representative of the Inuit found this solution acceptable. This is for me a confirmation that principle 2 is, in effect, expressive of fundamental tendencies and qualities of the human psyche, in which we can put our faith to meet the tremendous challenges and opportunities of our time. This experience also demonstrates the importance of respecting diversity in the application of principles to concrete realities, which requires diverse skills related to understanding.

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*Williams Sanchez was born
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He worked in Los Angeles
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Williams is fascinated
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When my company sent me here about four years ago, I didn't know how the University for Peace was, but I knew that it had a lot of people and cultures. I also knew a special person that caught my attention; his name was Mr. Robert Muller.¹⁸ He was an old person that told me a lot of stories of his life. He had been raised in Sarreguimines, on the French side of Germany, and he was young when Hitler took control of Europe. Later, Mr. Muller graduated from the University of Strasbourg after the war.

He impressed me because he spoke seven languages and sometimes he spoke about his thoughts and feelings about all humanity and the Earth. I used to think that people have to change a lot, but now I believe the world will not change unless we have a spiritual education because change has to start from within.

Returning to the topic of Mr. Muller- he was, as Margaret Mead said, "the most brilliant man in the United Nations." In Europe, after the end of the war, Mr. Muller's generation saw Hitler's armies enslaving their countries. Mr. Muller survived

the Second World War and, after the guns fell silent and the fields were once again fertile, Mr. Muller was determined to work for peace. Like he said: God did not grant me the gift of art. Therefore, I have to express myself through my own life, my own thoughts, my feelings, my dreams and my ideas, and my love for all humanity.

Finally, Mr. Muller left everything behind, joined the UN, and continues his dreams.

¹⁸Robert Muller is Co-Founder and Chancellor Emeritus of the University for Peace in Costa Rica. He has also been Assistant to several Secretary Generals of the United Nations, Recipient of the UNESCO Peace Education Prize, and the author of numerous books on cultivating a culture of peace.

Israa Hamad



Second-hand Clothes: Community-Builders?



Francesca Musiani
Student, Italy

Francesca Musiani is a Master's candidate in International Law and the Settlement of Disputes at the University for Peace, where she is researching how Information and Communication Technologies influence dispute resolution.

Francesca has past study and work experience in organizational communication and journalism, and is fluent in English, French, Spanish, and her native Italian.

Select, select, select, mother
These nice shoes they are wearing
And the nice trousers they are wearing
And the nice shirts they are wearing
It is salaula, mother
This year we are praising the Zaireans
For this bale you have given us, father
Because that is where salaula
is found, mother, pick from there

Translation of "Salaula,"
a song in Bemba language
by Zambian singer Teddy Chilambe,
reported in Karen Tranberg Hansen's
Salaula: The World of Secondhand Clothing
and Zambia,
University of Chicago Press, 2000.

They are those jumpers with one or two little holes that you keep in the cupboard and think about throwing away once next winter begins.

They are the shirts offered by your grandmother as Christmas presents, whose bright colors you have always found a little too bright for your taste.

They are the jeans that still carry some faint traces of your child's bread-and-jam feast in your lap, when she was little.

They are all the garments that you have several doubles of in your closet; you just don't know if there's going to be room for the next one you buy.

They are used clothes in the Western world, whose lives take a sudden turn after you decide that they still deserve more than the closest garbage bin. So you pack them up, and donate them to NGOs or charities, assuming that they will soon make the lives of local poor families a little warmer.

It might be. But often, and increasingly so, the beginning of their new life is also the start of a long journey - statistics show that up to seventy-five percent of all used clothes donated in the West end up not in the houses of Western poor, but in developing countries' second-hand clothing markets. Zambia, Rwanda, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda... How this journey actually happens, routing around controls and entering in spite of national regulations and bans, might remain a mystery for quite a while, wrapped in the complicated dynamics of today's global market. This article will hopefully provide some insight, instead, into what happens after the end of the journey: what are the implications and impacts of used clothing trade on the markets, cultures and lives of sub-Saharan regions and populations.

In recent times, anthropologists, sociologists and economists have analyzed the market of used clothes in least developed countries. These countries historically rely very heavily on imports of textiles and garments, mostly due to the abrupt switch from prior colonial systems to independent, but very basic and often inadequate, industrial systems. However, these products no longer come in small quantities from bordering countries as it used to be, but in bulk from Western countries: they are our old jumpers, shirts, and spotted Levi's. And a lot of them, too.

To what extent is this harmful to the already fragile economies of least developed countries? The recent focus

on sustainable development and sustainable business as a necessary element of the Millennium Development Goals has included several attempts to find an answer to this question.

Supporters of local industries argue that such trade is nothing but a transitory, easy “patch” to cover a hole that could otherwise constructively be filled with an articulate plan to boost local clothing industries, in countries that are very much in need of economic improvements. In this light, used clothing trade is also deemed responsible for encouraging foreign business and downplaying local business.¹⁹ Although barriers to trade and custom restrictions have been set up in some countries worldwide to try and prevent this, they seem to be of little effectiveness, as mentioned before, and the key to solving the problem will most likely have to be found elsewhere.

It is also argued, conversely, that the reason why these countries are not producing their own clothing does not lie in the used clothing trade, as there are cases of countries that are at the same time big importers of used clothes and producers of clothes on their own.²⁰

Least developed countries’ core issue in this regard is not, or not mainly, competition, but the lack of necessary equipment, investment and capital to start up a clothing market that can be competitive enough to face the challenges of the global market.²¹ Until the capital and tools are brought or built, it is unlikely and unrealistic that the development of a large textile industry is going to take place.

The deployment of support towards this aim, resource- and strategy-wise, by bodies such as the joint UNCTAD/WTO International Trade Centre, is probably premature and bound, for the moment, to failure.

Possible answers to the situation of clothing markets in least developed countries might come from the same dynamics of globalization that challenge them.²² There is more chance for different qualities, prices and shapes of clothes to find their way into a market that is truly global. Therefore, the answer might be diversification, experts say²³ - the ability of developing countries’ firms to find niche markets that the massive flow of low-price, low-quality clothing goods from giants like China completely neglects, but that do not disappear because of this.

Another solution might be to pursue, in the shorter term, further development in raw materials industries (e.g. farming of cotton), rather than in the whole chain of textile production for which developing countries still lack adequate infrastructure. Support for this view come both from the successful opposition, in countries such as Benin and Uganda, to subsidized exports of cotton by the U.S.A.²⁴, and from the 2006 ruling by the World Trade Organization that U.S.-subsidized cotton exports violate Brazil’s trade regulations. Effective and fair competition in cotton markets seems to be on the way and so does a place in these markets for least developed countries’ farmers and workers.

A number of factors seem to indicate, then, that the market for used clothes is not the cause - at least not the primary

¹⁹Baden, Sally, and Catherine Barber. *The Impact of the Second-Hand Clothing on Developing Countries*. Oxfam. www.oxfam.org.uk/resources/policy/trade/downloads/research_shc.pdf. 2005.

²⁰Also, Hansen, Karen Tranberg. Transnational Biographies and Local Meanings: Used Clothing Practices in Lusaka. *Journal of Southern African Studies*. 21,1 (1995): 7-8.

²¹Hansen, Karen Tranberg. *Salaula: The World of Secondhand Clothing and Zambia*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000. Also, Hansen, Karen Tranberg.

Transnational Biographies and Local Meanings: Used Clothing Practices in Lusaka. *Journal of Southern African Studies*. 21,1 (1995): 7-8.

²²Gorelick, Melissa. The Secrets of Used Clothes. *UN Chronicle* 3 (2006), New York: UN/DPI.

²³Mangieri, Tina. African Cloth, Export Production and Secondhand Clothing in Kenya. Working paper, Department of Geography, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2006.

one - that prevents a successful flourishing of the textile industry in least developed countries. Moreover, there is more to the realm of used clothing trade than meets the eye. What is it, then? What do clothes in general, and more specifically used clothes, mean in these countries?

Quite surprisingly, the answer to this question is social rather than economic, and can be summed up in “community,” at the macro and the micro levels.

Firstly, the wide increase in diversity of styles, materials, and quality that is fostered by the trade of used clothes leads to an increase in possible choice: purchasing, wearing and modifying used clothes is a sign of “being in the world.”²⁵ This also determines a shift in the status of these regions and their inhabitants; this shift can be more easily and accurately acknowledged if elements such as fashion, design, desires, and style are allowed to enter a picture that, if consisting only of figures and graphs, is quite sterile.

Secondly, used clothing trade is modifying the type and quantity of professions available in the job market, allowing for a number of local, small-scale tailors to work and thrive from creating new styles by modifying these used garments.²⁶

Thirdly, the connection of least developed countries to international trade, exemplified by the trade of used clothes, helps to achieve the inclusion of these countries into the global community.²⁷ The increased diversity in available garments now reaches even the most remote regions²⁸; the

“filter” of urban markets, that previously allowed only the remainders of used clothing markets to reach these regions, no longer applies today.

In conclusion, despite what a superficial glance might indicate, used clothing trade might in fact improve living standards in least developed countries. Our old jumpers, shirts and jeans tell very interesting stories. Not only about us - but also about how their journeys, longer and more complicated than we can imagine, can ultimately contribute to increasing developing countries’ awareness of being actors in their own right in the global international arena, while building and strengthening their sense of community in the process.

²⁵Ibid. Also, Masyuko, Mary. Uganda Considers Limits on Used-Clothing Imports. *International Market Research Report*. 2004. <http://strategis.ic.gc.ca/epic/site/imm-ri.nsf/en/gr122621e.html>.

²⁶Hansen, Karen Tranberg. *Salaula: The World of Secondhand Clothing and Zambia*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000.

²⁷Gorelick, Melissa. The Secrets of Used Clothes. *UN Chronicle* 3 (2006), New York: UN/DPI.

²⁸Mangieri, Tina. African Cloth, Export Production and Secondhand Clothing in Kenya. Working paper, Department of Geography, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2006.

²⁹Hansen, Karen Tranberg. *Salaula: The World of Secondhand Clothing and Zambia*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000.

Children Paint for Children



Gabriela Montero

Kitchen Staff, Costa Rica

*Gabriela Montero is
twenty years of age.*

*She likes Biology
and everything that has
to do with Nature,
but also believes
that if we don't take care
of our environment,
there won't be
much of it left to admire.*

*She is a participant
of Rotaract Club La Guaria
and found out about
the Association*

*"Children Paint For Children"
through her parents,
both of whom
are long-standing
Rotary Club members.*

*One night,
she went with her mom
to the children's paint exhibition
and was touched*

The Association "Children Paint for Children" aims to affect positive change in the lives of disadvantaged children in Costa Rica who are sick or at social risk; have been neglected; or, face economic hardship. The vision for the Association came about ten years ago, through art workshops offered by Mrs. Lila Herrera. These workshops draw more than 100 children together every year to re-enforce their technique and love of painting. In addition to teaching art, Mrs. Lila has emphasized the importance of values such as solidarity, charity, and equality, and she has thereby instilled in her students a desire to help children in need through painting.

In 2005, "Children Paint for Children" was officially registered as an Association. Since then, the Association has worked on projects such as producing a yearly calendar that is fully illustrated with children's paintings from Mrs. Lila's workshops (see above for images from the 2008 agenda). This project has enabled the Association to solicit donations and engagement from a range of community members, including private firms and organizations. All proceeds go directly to helping children in need.

I had the opportunity to speak with Mrs. Lila over the phone, and I asked her what motivated her to realize this inspiring vision for disadvantaged children. According to Mrs. Lila, it all began when one of her students - who was already from a disadvantaged background - became seriously ill. She went to visit the student at the Children's Hospital, and noticed what a marvelous hospital this was. However, at the same time, Mrs. Lila also noticed that the hospital faced a lack of resources and equipment. This led Mrs. Lila to ask herself: "Why not make a modest contribution to the community, for children who are at risk?"



*by the expression of joy,
motivation, and dedication
in the children's faces
as they showed off
their paintings.*

Out of the many positive contributions and inspiring stories that have come about as a result of this project, allow me to share with you only one example. Last year, the Association brought a little joy into the lives of children who, in special or critical treatment, often spend hours or even entire days at the hospital. With the money raised through selling paintings made by children in her workshops and through the sale of the beautiful calendars, the Association was able to buy DVD's and films for children in each of the hospital rooms. Mrs. Lila commented that one of the children's paintings (i.e. the first image shown in the figure above, with the children holding each other's hands) was purchased by a company that makes children's clothing. Doctors from the same Children's Hospital where her student was first admitted have also bought paintings to decorate the walls of the hospital.





David Korish

*Visiting Professor,
United States/Costa Rica*

David Korish is Associate Professor of Theatre Studies at the National University of Costa Rica and co-director, with Roxana Avila, of Teatro Abya Yala, an independent theatre company based in Costa Rica since 1991. He received his B.A. in English Literature from Columbia University (1984) and Masters in Fine Arts with emphasis in Theatre Directing from Carnegie-Mellon University (1989). The recipient of a Fulbright Specialist Scholarship for Professional Exchange in 1991, he has taught at the University level and conducted professional

There was one class that particularly stands out for me this year in our Theatre and Peacebuilding class. We had just completed an assignment in which small groups had to prepare and lead a game or exercise drawn from Augusto Boal's *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*. The idea behind the assignment is to stimulate a shared responsibility for a small body of classtime as well as begin to cross the bridge towards leading a large group in practical activities. The games and exercises were well-chosen, well-prepared, and well-led, and so the journey that was articulated as result of the sequence was rich and fun.

Later we set out to dissect why the experience was so good. This reflection on the session turned into probably the richest discussion we had in the class as we began to get underneath the fun we had in playing the games and address some of the subterranean issues supporting the exercise: the challenges of group leadership and shared leadership; how to strike a balance between what is necessary for an activity to go well and the need for leadership to be horizontal in structure and fluid in dynamic; the role of willing participation from an individual point of view; the difference between group consensus and group acquiescence; the role of patience in leading an activity; the ideas of real listening, and of being truly present.

In addition, we talked at length about an issue that would turn into a kind of leitmotif during the next few weeks of the class: the tension between agenda and flow, how to be prepared but also flexible in the moment of leading a game, how the only true way to improvise—to go with the flow—is to have sufficient structure that protects you from collapse. One student mentioned how this balance is so applicable to the world of politics in that so many problems arise when

people just stick stubbornly to an agenda and stop seeing how to relate that agenda to what's going on around them.

For the first time, talking about games became a way to talk cogently and organically about all these issues that are relevant to both their Peace Studies programs and even our lives at large. It became clear that what is essential to a good theatre exercise illuminates what is essential to a rich human experience. And, as we began to discuss how one group led into the next, how the journey as a whole was constructed, we noticed the session reflected a deepening, a building, a layering in the construction of our relationships.

The first group began with an exercise of Concentration as we tried to come to a place of individual focus. This gave way to an exercise of Trust, and we observed that mutual trust cannot exist without individual focus and concentration. The next group introduced the idea of Play, and we discussed how Play, in its richest, most vital manifestation, truly can only emerge in a place where trust has been established. To play you must trust. The next group introduced the incorporation of the Imagination, as we began to work for the first time from the creative self, first physical creativity and then both physical and mental. Again this sense of deepening and layering became apparent as we observed how, only after having established a groundwork of trust and play, can we give ourselves over to the personal risk of being creative. And finally, we came back around full circle to a game of Trust, but now a more complex exercise which introduced the concept of opposition and conflict. This seemed fascinating in that to play within an adversarial relationship requires a tremendous degree of Concentration, Trust, Play, and Imagination. The tail had wound back upon itself but had also dug itself deeper into the terrain of human encounter, creating more a spiral than circle. Uncovering the

*workshops worldwide,
including Brazil,
the United States,
Guatemala,
Belize, Germany,
and Spain,
and has directed
professionally in England,
Scotland, Belgium, Denmark
and the United States.*

archaeological substructure of the series of games didn't make playing them less fun, but it did clearly shed light on the essential relationship between Play, Human Relationships and creating a Group Experience.

I write this on the eve of our Final Presentation, and confess to having mixed feelings about what we will do tomorrow. It is important to share some our work with the community-at-large, in this case the University for Peace, even though there is so much we are unable to share. But the deepest misgiving stems from the awareness that, while we can share some of the work that emerged from our time together, and try to communicate a sense of the spirit of our class, the essential component that defined our experience cannot really be shared.

For I realized very clearly this year that it is the games and exercises we did together that hold the real value of the course. It is the songs, the tripping, the tangling, the dancing, the balloons and bears, the sitting on the knees, the reaching in the blindness...it is through all this *total silliness*, in this power of play, that we experience the essence of the relationship between theatre and peacebuilding. And of course what we played we cannot share; we cannot be silly before people and expect them to understand what is going on at the heart of the game, at the heart of that experience. If we did make that mistake, it wouldn't be real play anymore; it would a performance of play, something totally different. Because it is the *experience* of the game, the doing it, the freely playing it together wherein lies the secret. And it became clear that the value of play is precisely in that you must be part of the experience in order to understand and appreciate it. Play is always about building a new experience, letting go of the past in order to build the game together, the rich and playful now, the always silly present.

Augusto Boal understood this; and that is why I'd like to believe he has been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. Not because of the Theatre of the Oppressed so readily identified with his name, but rather because of the Games he wants us to play, for reminding us that in order for us to be together in mind, body and spirit, we must be able to play together.

Nicole Pion



This picture was taken on my birthday and I think it demonstrates the sense of community here at UPEACE, which is quite unique. I can't think of any other time in my life when I have been able to share my birthday with friends from ten different countries! The shared experience of studying at UPEACE has drawn us all together for this short time, and this community that we have created will soon disperse. But the UPEACE community's strength lies in the fact that it does not have to be tangible. No matter where we find ourselves six months from now, or with whom we celebrate our next birthday, the UPEACE 'community' that we have created will still be very much alive and well.



Amr Abdalla

*UPEACE Vice-Rector
for Academic Affairs, Egypt*

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Before arriving at UPEACE,
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a Professor of Conflict
Analysis and Resolution at the
Graduate School of Islamic
and Social Sciences
in Leesburg, Virginia
Both his academic and
professional careers
are multi-disciplinary.
He obtained a law degree in
Egypt in 1977 where he
practiced law as a prosecuting*

The community that has impressed me for years now is that of UPEACE students! I want to talk about this from my own angle and to express gratitude for how this community has been instrumental to my motivation and effort for many years.

By no means is UPEACE unique in terms of bringing people together from many countries, cultures, and backgrounds to study at the graduate level. Universities in the US and Europe perhaps have more diversity in quantitative terms than UPEACE. But, UPEACE stands out because of its intense academic and non-academic life. Once at UPEACE, a student is 'stuck' between Ciudad Colon, El-Rodeo, and our small, breath-taking campus. The entire system sets a daily rhythm that starts with a well-maintained bus schedule, class time, lunch time, afternoon hangout at UPEACE, and evening outings, parties and get-togethers. And, of course in the middle of all this, students find time to study, write papers, prepare for exams, and finish theses! We are all continuously engaged with each other every day for 11 months! There is almost no way out of getting to know people from every walk of life.

In addition to all this, and returning back to UPEACE students more specifically, I have found that, as a community and as individuals, they have this amazing influence on me. I have worked in many places in the past, but never had I experienced the sense of connection and belonging that I do with UPEACE students. It starts from the moment I am driving to UPEACE in the morning. Often, I pick up students on my way to campus. I noticed early on

that, most of the time when I did this, the students and I engaged in light discussions, jokes, and laughter that became like an energizer to me for the rest of the day! There were times when I drove to UPEACE carrying a heavy burden of work-related tension, worries, and sometimes frustration. But, once I came face-to-face with UPEACE students either as they caught a ride with me, or as I met them in the hallways, they had this magical influence on me that I cannot comprehend! Somehow, the smile on a student's face, a light joke, or even a reminder that a student owed me a paper, or I owed her or him a grade, brought back the perspective that I very much needed in order to carry on with positive energy.

Then, there are those many students who come every year with wonderful suggestions for action and change. Every year, groups of students come to my office to discuss an issue or a concern about our UPEACE life. And, often, they also come up with suggestions for specific actions or projects to address this issue or concern. In such cases, together, we engage in long-term activities to build up the action plan or project. Such activities, including this one that Jessica and Lisa led (I refer to them as the 'Narrative Ladies'), give me the chance to meet with the students several times over weeks or months and to together build up a project and see it to completion. Last year, it was Jeff Lais and the Student Bill of Rights and Responsibilities; the year before, it was the Asia Fest with Morse, Zahid, Ajit, Jennifer, Rachna and many others; the year before, it was the electronic Year Book with Grace, Balazs, Dina, and again, many others. And, these are only a few among many

attorney from 1978 to 1987. He then emigrated to the U.S. where he obtained a Master's degree in Sociology and a Ph.D. in Conflict Analysis and Resolution from George Mason University.

He has been an active figure in promoting effective cross-cultural messages within the Islamic and Arabic-speaking communities in America through workshops, T.V. and radio presentations. He has also been actively involved in inter-faith dialogues in the United States. He pioneered the development of the first conflict resolution training manual for the Muslim communities in the United States titled ("...Say Peace"). He also founded Project LIGHT (Learning Islamic Guidance for Human Tolerance), a community peer-based anti-discrimination project funded by the National Conference for Community and Justice (NCCJ).

other projects. Such experiences, as small as they may appear, are in themselves rich with what they brought to me and the students: stronger bonds, trust, a belief in what we can accomplish, team work, and a sense of fulfillment. This is community!

UPEACE students: You are my inspiration, and what you have contributed to me as a person, teacher, and administrator has been the richest and most beautiful inspiration in my life. In all the languages of the world, I say Thank You and In Peace.

Pagina en blanco

VI. Musings



Pagina en blanco

Community:

Sometimes It's Hot, Sometimes It's Not



Juan M. Amaya Castro

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*Juan Amaya Castro is employed
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*He has many identities:
Dutch, right handed, male,
lawyer, academic,
Colombian, white,
nerd, overweight,
middle-aged*

*(although for some young
and for some old),
citizen of the world,
homeless nomad,
and many others.*

*He believes
in the possibility
of wisdom,
and also in luck.*

The Complexities of Community

For most people, the notion of Community has a nice sound or color. It is almost invariably used in contexts with a positive function or connotation, just like 'love', 'peace', 'harmony', and many other similar words. It is a word that usually does not require a specific definition; in fact, it more or less speaks for itself, and what it says is nice and cuddly and fuzzy and warm.

A closer look at the use of the word gives us some interesting insights. For one, the word 'community' does not refer to everybody or everyone. When referring to those total categories, people usually refer instead to 'the international community', 'the global community', 'the community of humankind', or to a completely different word that sounds similar: humanity. The word 'community', by contrast, more often refers to a locality, a small scale that evokes coziness, as in 'community centers' or 'community colleges'. It refers to a group of people, and not to everyone, as in 'the community of human rights activists', the 'community of immigrants'. And, sometimes, it even refers to groups of people that are scattered about, such as the 'global community of peace educators'. In other words, 'community' seems to be a bit more complex upon closer analysis than at first sight.

In this short piece, I want to explore this complexity a bit further. I will start by pursuing a hunch that tells me that the notion of community is about exclusion as well as about inclusion; that it has less to do with a specific content and more to do with boundaries. I will do this first by sketching out what is so great about the boundaries of Community. I will then try to illustrate why the boundaries of Community are not so great at all - why being part of a Community can

be a negative experience, and why Community can be something to keep in check rather than unleash. I will end with some reflections on what this might mean, ethically and aesthetically. I will also try to put forth some ideas about how one might relate to Community in view of its confusing complexity.

Community is Cool

What is it about the notion of Community that makes it so appealing, so seductive and so powerful? Well, as John Donne famously said in the early 17th Century, "no man is an island," or in the words of Aristotle, or somebody long before him, "man is a social animal." Or, even better, that same wisdom is echoed by Homer Simpson in *The Simpsons: the Movie*, when he concludes that "without others, I am nobody." People base their individual identities on belonging to a particular group or community. Identity is a tag that refers to a collective trait. Everybody has at least one (usually many), and everybody needs one.

Moreover, Community means strength, the strength of solidarity: "united we stand," and "one for all, all for one." Community is about reliance and security, about feeling safe and sheltered. Interaction with others in a Community is fraternal and altruistic. Amidst the scariness of the world and the dangers of nature, Community is about culture and order, as opposed to chaos. Community is about giving and receiving, as opposed to taking and losing. Community is also about the whole, which is more than the sum of its parts; and it is, in that sense, abstract and mystical, something unfathomable and transcendental: 'we are one'. Community is maternal, in the sense that it cares for us; it is also paternal, in the sense that it directs us, gives us a place and a purpose. Community is about the ultimate beauty of being connected,

of belonging, of having a common past, a common present, a common purpose.

In today's world, amidst growing uncertainties, climate change, and the threat of impending catastrophes of all sorts, Community offers itself as a solution, as a necessity, as a way out of the aggregate lack of direction that seems to be heading for the abyss. Community is the idea that reminds us of our interdependence: "united we stand, together we fall." Without Community, there is no control, or as the *Dutch put it: ieder voor zich. God voor ons allen*. Everyone for him or herself. God for us all. Without Community, we cannot help each other - we are at the mercy of God.

Community is about intimacy, about togetherness. As the song goes: "We are a family. Brother, sister, one family." Community is a nest, a haven, a site of nurturing and growth, about caring for the weak and needy, about common values, common interests, the common good. Community is understanding, tolerance, and peace. Community is love, and isn't love all you need?

Community is Not So Cool

So, after all that, what can possibly be wrong with Community, with all that it offers and represents? For one, Community does not come about just like that. It is often the product of strife and imposition, something that needs to be defended against disintegrating forces, something that is artificial and, as Benedict Anderson has pointed out, imagined. Community is something that is created by emphasizing distinctions from others. As the 'we' or the 'us' takes shape, so does the 'they' and the 'them'. "You are either one of us or one of them"; "either with us or against us," etc. Community demands loyalty and punishes transgressors. Indeed, in order to survive, it has to enforce its boundaries, sometimes brutally. Community takes care of you, but for a price. *La Cosa Nostra* and patriotism have a lot in common. Treason and sedition are traditionally counted

among the worst possible crimes; ratting out your buddies is something that can hardly ever be justified. Community is something that needs to be policed, constantly, by everybody: "We don't do things like that here," or any other use of the idea of the 'abnormal' to signal out deviance and discipline the deviant.

Communities are governed, and government is hierarchical, even when 'democratic'. Majority rule is one way in which Community can oppress; ironically, and tellingly, one only invokes the existence of a consensus when there is disagreement or dissent. Community will often become reified, or 'thingified', made into a 'thing' in and of itself. People will refer to Community as if it is a monolithic entity 'out there', which really exists, rather than as something that is always in a moment of becoming and always filled with disaggregate forces of contestation. Instead, this or that is 'good for the Community' and therefore some people should forget their individual interests. Community becomes the rhetorical tool used to discipline, regulate, and oppress, where necessary. In fact, Community becomes the cloak of elites, the watchword of a status quo based on some form of privilege and entitlement.

Community is boundaries. It was the existence of Community that impeded the love affair between Romeo and Juliet, who belonged to rival families. Community is what is invoked to restrain migration, to ostracize, and harass migrants. It is the idea that talks of 'integration', when what is meant is 'assimilation'. You abandon your identity, your ways, your values, if you want to live here. If you don't like that, leave; go back to where you came from. Community is what is invoked to say that this part of the world belongs to 'us', and you are not one of 'us'. Community is ghetto; it is oppression. It is the language of those who tell you who you are, and of those who tell you who you are (not) allowed to be. "Whites only." And also: Leonardo Da Vinci *was not really* gay, Barak Obama *is not really* African American, Margaret Thatcher *is not really* a woman, etc. 'Belonging' cuts both

ways. Community is used to keep people out; it is used to keep people in.

Zen, or the Art of Wielding the Sword

Like knives and swords, Community has a double edge. Like love and friendship, it is a tool of selective embrace, a tool of selective exclusion. Beware when invoking it - it could do harm. What is required is wisdom, or what Aristotle called *phronesis*, meaning a deep knowledge of what to do, depending on the circumstances. Here are some suggestions, or rather, some insights to keep in mind when wielding the sword:

1) Community is a selective way of describing the world: It is a tool of aesthetics, an epistemological instrument. Community is never really already there. Rather, it is made, constructed, given a substance in the act of its utterance and reiteration. As such, it is selective, it imposes boundaries. It is a way of cutting up the world - the world out there and the world in here - into definable entities; insides and outsides; us and them. The more inclusively it is used, the more of the world 'out there' it includes, the more of the world 'in here' it excludes, and vice versa. Too much Community ends up excluding the individual, too much individualism ends up excluding the social. What is required is a delicate and nuanced consciousness of this selective process of boundary formation. What is required is a sense of Community as a dynamics.

2) Community has a normative effect; it creates winners and losers. It is a political tool, and one that is usually grounded in an ethics. Its use is crucial in the way a political entity is constructed and essential in the way political processes are defined. Whether one is talking about a Community of friends, or about the family, or a university, or a city or state, or about the world, the language of Community-boundaries, us and them, inside and outside, always has real-life effects on its participants. Community is the product of power: the

messy realm in which politics is used to allocate resources, identities, and accountability. Community is always utopia for some, always oppression for others. It embraces some, suffocates others. What is required is an understanding of Community as an act of power, as something with an effect. One never gets the full picture, either in terms of aesthetics or in terms of ethics. There is always a large degree of unknowability in our perspective on the world, in the value of our actions. The way to deal with this is to remain open and aware, humble and curious. Good luck.

A Reflection on Community



Noah Taylor
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His areas of academic interest
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Reassurance along the “path less traveled” can be hard to come by. I am often swept away and I overlook the importance of community in relation to peace, in relation to everything. I have been involved in many different movements, protests, campaigns, and the like. Some of these have felt hollow, usually the ones that did not work, and the ones that fell apart. The movements that had a strong community as a foundation seemed to possess a ‘life energy’ of their own.

The largest obstacles I see in any grassroots movement or organization is a lack of community or perhaps a poor relationship to a good community. I have met so many amazing people who cared so much, fought so hard. But the realities, the difficulties on any path to peace, can quickly steal the compassion that drove us to fight in the first place - leaving too many wonderful people jaded, leading so many people to give up.

David Rovics, a progressive folk singer in the US has the following verse in his song, “*Behind the Barricades*”:

As the movement grows
There will be hills and bends
But at the center of the struggle
Are your lovers and your friends
The more we hold each other up
The less we can be swayed
Here’s to love and solidarity
And a kiss behind the barricades.”

I think most of us realize the value of community at some level. But it is so easy to get stuck in our own judgment, fear, and confusion. We know that a community can keep us awake, keep us connected, keep us strong, and provide us

with a mirror to examine ourselves. The Buddha recognized the importance of community, placing it as one of the three jewels or refuges essential for following the path towards enlightenment. There are too few refuges; we must take care of the ones we have. It has to be the best place to start. You would be hard pressed to find a place where you were not already in a community.

Ideally, then, to create a strong movement toward peace, we should try to create a supporting community. I often wonder if something like this can be intentionally constructed. It is like trying to make a family. After all, who is not in this family? Who could be excluded on the path to peace? To be honest, I don’t know how to build such a community, but I do know that when one begins, you can feel it; you can feel its life beginning. Perhaps we could spend some of our time here to take a step back from ourselves and examine the community that we have built thus far in our short time here at UPEACE. Maybe we could reflect on what makes a community. Is it what you thought it would be? Is it what you wanted it to be? What has worked well? What areas need to be improved? How important is community to you? What stands in the way of your community reaching its full potential? What obstacles prevent you from becoming a part of a community? I do know that, for whatever we do build to work, it must come from a place and it must be a harbor for more love and compassion than we could ever think possible.

Our task is so large, so twisted and tangled and often too much to bear. Nonetheless we should give it a try. What could be more revolutionary? What alone could do more for peace?

Menandro Abanes

Haiku

Wondering

Aloft birds are free
Overlooking you and me
Who gets the best view?

In love

Falling hard like rain
Millions of drops pushing down
My heart, falling too.

Objectivity

Glass windows see through
I'm inside watching airplane
And a bird crashes.

Senryu

Separation

As the bus moved on,
I looked around to see you
Not in this bus, sigh.

Submission

Deadline tomorrow
Number of words incomplete
What the heck! I'll sleep.

Choices

Fiestas, beach outings
discos, traveling around
Homework, anyone?

Various Contributors

When the designs are chosen with care, tatoos have a power and magic all their own. They decorate the body but they also enhance the soul. ~Michelle Delio



[A] genuine tattoo.... tells a story. I like stories and tatoos, no matter how well done, and if they don't tell a story that involves you emotionally, then they're just there for decoration, then they're not a valid tattoo. There has to be some emotional appeal or they're not, to my way of thinking, a real tattoo. It tells people what you are and what you believe in, so there's no mistakes.

~Leo, tattooist, 1993, quoted in Margo DeMello, Bodies of Inscription, 2000

A tattoo is a true poetic creation, and is always more than meets the eye. As a tattoo is grounded on living skin, so its essence emotes a poignancy unique to the mortal human condition.

~V. Vale and Andrea Juno, Modern Primitives

*A man without tatoos is invisible to the Gods.
~Iban Proverb*

The following is a collection of tatoos and their stories from the community of the University for Peace in Costa Rica. From all corners of the world, these people have come together with the sincere intention of connecting and joining in the effort to make the world a better place, cliché as that may sound. Their unique backgrounds and adventures have helped shape the wonderful, dedicated, creative, and crazy people they are today. Each one of the following tatoos came to life for a different reason; each one has a story to tell; each one shows what we believe in; each one says something about the people we are and want to be.

I NEVER WANTED A TATTOO, but while I was living in Vanuatu as a Peace Corps Volunteer, the idea of a custom

tattoo grew on me. So, during my last month I asked a good friend of mine, Roy, to give me a custom tattoo of a seed of a Nakatombol Tree. I

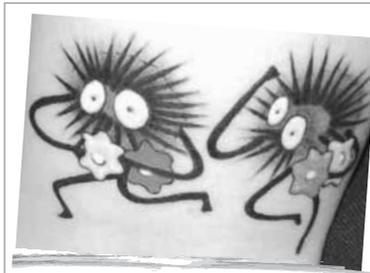


picked the seed because to me it represents the amazing designs that are found in nature. To prepare for my tattoo, Roy went into the forest and got a special leaf from which he would later use the water to mix with the soot from a Kerosene light to make the ink. To apply the ink to my skin, Roy used a sewing needle. The whole process took about 20 minutes. When I look at my tattoo, I'm able to recall my time in Vanuatu, and am reminded of my appreciation of nature.



I THOUGHT FOR YEARS ABOUT MY FIRST TATTOO since I wanted it to mean something and not just look pretty, to be a statement of my whole view on life. I finally settled on this design, which flows from my family and roots to the leaves of the whole world. As a connection

to my Irish heritage, I wanted the design to be Celtic. I also wanted it to show a deep connection to nature. This design is from a Celtic journal given to me by my sister for being in her wedding. An environmentalist through and through, I happened to choose the Celtic design for the Spirit of the Forest. Made of antlers and moons, it shows the balance of male and female energies. The image shows the balance and connections that flow through life. The three half moons also stand for the three stages of life, highlighting the value of every step in our journey and of our presence here. The spirals accentuate that our lives connect in and outside of ourselves and develop and build upon past experiences. I added the central triad in memory of my uncle Robert who dedicated his life to helping others and gave his life in the process. It is to remind me that we are all connected and can help every day, even in 'small' ways. Every act, every smile makes a difference. Every moment.



They make us smile.

MY BEST FRIEND AND I got identical "sootballs" tattoos on our ankles right before I left California for UPEACE. The characters are from Hayao Miyazaki's movie, "Spirited Away" (2001).

THIS IS MY FIRST TATTOO that I got in honor of a trip I took to Guatemala. The tattoo is of a Quetzal Bird. I did a LOT of research about the bird and its symbolism before I went forward with the inking. There was a lot of change going on in my life when I got the ink. I went to an artist with my sister and her best friend and he opened his store on a day that it is normally closed to work on me. They sat by me for the hour that it took for the artist to finish. It's an experience I will remember for the rest of my life!



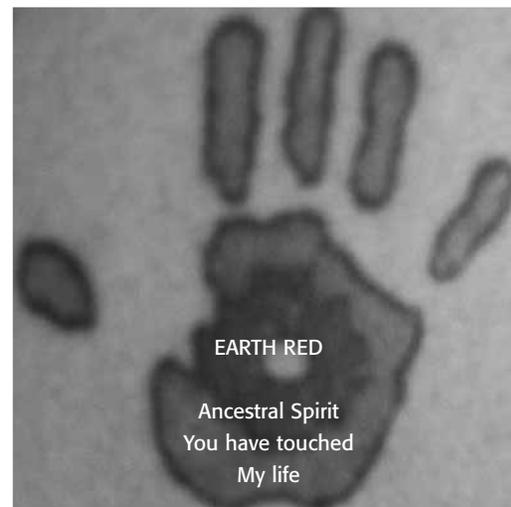
"The Resplendent Quetzal was considered divine, associated with the 'snake god', Quetzalcoatl by Pre-Columbian Central American civilizations. Their iridescent green tail feathers, symbols for spring plant growth,

were venerated by the ancient Mayas and Aztecs, who viewed the quetzal as the 'god of the air' and as a symbol of goodness and light. Mesoamerican rulers and some nobility of other ranks wore headdresses made from quetzal feathers, symbolically connecting them to Quetzalcoatl. Since it was a crime to kill a quetzal, the bird was simply captured, its long tail feathers plucked, and was set free. Quetzalcoatl was the creator god and god of wind, often depicted with grey hair. In several Mesoamerican languages, the term for quetzal can also mean precious, sacred, or erected." (Resplendent Quetzal, from Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Resplendent_Quetzal)



MY TATTO IS A MIX between a Persian design and a Celtic knot. It represents my background and reminds me that, in the end, we all are citizens of the world. My family came from Spain to Costa Rica in the 16th century, but before that one part had fled from Scotland, changed its name and settled in northern

Spain. The other part came from Persia, through Africa and then settled in the south of Spain. Mix them with conquerors, and that's my background. My tattoo also has a spiritual and emotional significance, but in general it is a pretty design that reminds me that there is more to the world than it seems.



EARTH RED

Ancestral Spirit
You have touched
My life



FAE

Faerie, Belief
Naked, Innocence
She sits upon Lotus, Peace
Earth, Solidarity amid us each
Air, Leaves gently dancing on the wind
The season change, in its pure innocence we play
Ever your spirit does wander, to what end we will see
Fire, Energetic flames of Jupiter aglow
Water, Sea where it all began
Nourishing the vine, Solid
To connect us, Home
Fertility, Rebirth

Many Thanks To All
Who Contributed
Peace



Muhiba Rabejanova
Student, Tajikistan

*Who is Muhiba Rabejanova?
She is a person
who believes that human beings,
not their titles, are important.
She is someone
who finds joy
in life's simple pleasures.
She is happy that she is free
and can express her opinions
freely.
She is just another person
who wants to do
good deeds
and be a friend
to those around her.
The most important thing
about Muhiba is:
she is an ordinary person
just like you.*

We live in a beautiful, fragile, and small world, and yet there is so much diversity in it. Nature, culture, people, and climates all differ from one end of it to another. We look different, we live in different ways, and we have different languages, food, clothing, traditions, religions, and much more. As separate individuals and societies, we conceive the practice and concept of community differently. Nevertheless, although we might all have a personal opinion about community and apply it in our own way, we belong to distinct societies and groups, and mostly follow their ways of thinking and behaving.

I lived in the United States for several years. Reflecting on my life and experiences there, I have come to believe that in the United States, rampant individualism is promoted to the extent that the responsibilities of giving to a community, and vice versa, have been dismissed. At the same time, there seem to be so many charities and community events to which almost everybody wants to belong, because it is "the right thing to do." What I found interesting about the sense of community in the United States is that they have promoted this idea of a 'melting pot', where cultures blend into 'one'. They have tried to weld a feeling of solidarity and commonality; to encourage all U.S. citizens to shed their ethnic roots and become part of an American identity. All, paradoxically, in the name of individualism.

This movement towards getting rid of your ethnic identity - so much that you do not even want to speak your mother tongue to your children - is a sure way to prevent the development of a nourished community. I cannot help but wonder whether the same destiny is awaiting European countries, particularly members of the European Union? Will they face the same social difficulties as the U.S. does, in terms of the homogenization of its peoples? If a person

forgets where he or she comes from, and instead tries to become someone he or she is not and never will be, that person is doomed to be an incomplete member of any community and will not be content within society. It is important to keep in mind that keeping your own culture is remaining true to who you are, and yet appreciating others is the main prerequisite to building a powerful, inclusive, and united community.

I keep mentioning community, as well as asserting that cultural awareness and appreciation are the main conditions to creating a peaceful community. But, is community permanent or temporary? I am afraid I do not know. All I know is that, during human growth and maturation, people encounter sets of other individuals and experiences. Infants first encounter their immediate family, then their extended family, and then local groups (such as school and work). They thus develop their individual and group identities through associations that connect them to life-long group experiences. As people mature, they learn about and form perceptions of social structures. During this period, they form personal and cultural values, as well as world views and attitudes toward a larger community: global society.

Individuals develop relationships with one another and begin to make choices about with whom they want to associate themselves. Through this, they start to form groups, and when these groups are created, thus emerges this sense of belonging and brotherhood where everyone helps and protects one another. People form groups for different reasons; people enter these groups with various motives and interests in mind. These groups often fall apart once interests are met and there is nothing remaining to hold the members together. If we suppose that these groups are communities, it seems appropriate to state that communities appear to stick

together on a temporary rather than on a permanent basis. They form as circumstances arise, and when this need has been met, people go back to their individualistic mood.

Why do we need to form groups? Especially when we are no longer in high school, when there was an extensive need for a sense of belonging? Wouldn't it be better to let things happen freely, and not push everything and everyone into little niches? We always tend to seek an ideal setting where we can build our perfect little world and try to stretch it to fit all of our expectations for a perfect and idyllic space. Only, in doing so, we neglect what we already have: our daily experiences at workplaces and neighborhoods, civic groups, the cinema, our local markets and stores, the world itself. This is all a part of forming a sense of community, and identity even.

It is time to face reality and understand that in today's world, there cannot be any other community than the global community. Children need to be raised in a way that they are ready to take in all the wonderful flavors that the world has to offer. I come from a society that I think has prepared us well for becoming skillful and very flexible individuals who can relate to a diversity of people in the world, not only to their local communities. Just thinking about it put me in awe one night. Tajikistan is a secular democracy, where the majority of the population is Muslim; we were part of the former Soviet Union; we are culturally and ethnically close to Afghanistan and Iran; we are in the same geographical area as China. When we -Tajik children- were growing up, we had no idea that when we would become adults and start our careers, and if we were lucky enough to get to travel internationally, that we would have a big number of people around the globe to whom we could relate.

As Muslims, we are considered brothers and sisters amongst all the Muslims in the world, which means that we have shelter and support almost everywhere in the world. As citizens of a country that was under Soviet rule, we can

relate to all other fourteen countries that were once a part of the Soviet Union. Also, all of us, in addition to our native languages, speak Russian, which enables us to communicate without any barriers. This gives us friends and shelter in the former Soviet block. In addition to all this, we share a special historic and ethnic bond with Tajiks in Afghanistan, as well as Iranians, because we have the same roots. Whenever we meet an Iranian or an Afghan person anywhere in the world, we have this wonderful opportunity to connect even more.

Considering all this, it is important to remember that, instead of losing our identity and becoming a part of a 'melting pot', we have to remember who we are, including our history and values. In doing this, we are not creating problems. There is always something that we can find in one another that we can relate to. If all of us were to sit down and find things we have in common with other nations, cultures, and even religions, we would be able to reduce the world's problems by half. I say enough to forming little groups, and trying to protect 'that group' or 'that community' against the "others"!

It is time for us to focus on what we can do to help the world -we have had enough of this individualistic and one-sided worldview. There needs to be only one community - that is the global community, from which no one should be left out.

Lisa Jokivirta



The eye is the first circle



Hamish Low
*Student, New
Zealand*

*Hamish was
conceived
under a coconut
tree in Fiji.*

The eye is the first circle
I haven't stared at the sun long enough to know its shape
the ripple of a raindrop
perfect circles falling like fallout
I could feel them on my skin as I walked slowly through the
trees breaking the sonic mesh of cicadas,
silent as I passed.

Earlier that evening two guys jumped me
demanded my empty wallet.
With the first punch a poem appeared fully formed in my
mind,
like it had been transferred from his fist.
Not a very good poem but then it wasn't a very hard punch.

memories
fallen from your mind
lie
wrapped like presents
under the trees

I felt strangely calm.
I got away okay.
Apparently sudden poems about forgetfulness are
one of the first signs of early-onset alzheimers.
On the road ahead a truck was engulfed in flames.
I could hear the metal contorting in the heat
and I hoped noone was inside.
An old man stood, his weight on his walking stick,
listening to the fire, his eyes blurred with cataracts.
"¿Por que?" I asked him
"Cocaina" he said
without a glance.
The fire danced in his heavy-rimmed glasses
and for a moment I thought maybe he had started it.

I watched his hand shaking like paper,
his fist clench and unclench,
and then slowly walked away.
I thought about a video I'd watched that day
a ten-year-old Iraqi boy,
his hands blown off by a cluster bomb saying
"someone give me some hands,
if I have no hands I'll kill myself"
I wondered how he could kill himself with no hands,
and then thought,
of course,
he could find a way
and I felt guilty at how cynical,
how jaded I had become

Imagination
is the first qualification
of the revolutionary
Something that children have but so often adults have lost,
somewhere along the way,
like the ability to draw with crayons.
the love of money is a haemorrhage of the human spirit
and war is a failure of the imagination
to make the same mistake
knowingly
is negligence
to make the same mistake
repeatedly
is insanity
or worse.
only two weeks of holiday
should be plenty enough reason for
and time to
plan a revolution

4 in the morning and I was stumbling alone through London. My brain had arrived under heavy anaesthetic, ready for re-transplant. I met some friends, left them in a club and went out for air. Somehow I couldn't retrace my steps. I followed my mental map of the monopoly board through the square mile of the City, that insane, inhumane concentration of wealth. With the clarity that only whisky, over lesser spirits, can bring, I could hear the money, buzzing, inside the walls. East through Whitechapel. Outside the mosque there were maybe 200 people, all men, all in white. it was Ramadan and they were breaking the fast before dawn. I walked slowly through the crowd and I could feel the energy of these people, all their minds aligned toward Mecca. It was pure and it was good. It was the same thing I sensed in an old wooden church at my brother's wedding and while dancing, with 20,000 other humans on the top of a mountain in the middle of nowhere for the millennium. There's something that happens when humans are together some greater sense

time is a veil
something Einstein also understood experientially
how we are energy swimming in energy
from Miradór you can see a slowly falling star, the sun
melt behind the hills
and the moon rise
its heavy smiling eye
smothering the city with light

make every day new
never forget
how precious this life is
cultivate
an ever-deepening
awareness
of what being
here
on this planet means
communication and co-creation

make at the very least
a minor contribution
to the greater good
share
laugh more,
worry less
remember to breathe
deeper
close your eyes
patterns pulse
quick and kinaesthetic
they hypnotise
mesmerise
the disparate moments of the day become
sleeping pixels in the white noise of your unconscious
a black moth with crepe paper wings circles a streetlight
a billion raindrops fall to the sea
and so
soon
the little lines
between everyone you have seen
every place you have ever been
connect

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Marco Rosaire Rossi
Student, United States

Marco Rosaire Rossi is from the United States. When he is not studying Superman and preparing his home in case of a zombie take over, he likes to write stories, poems, and bad jokes. He is a currently a student at the University for Peace in Costa Rica, but despite this fact he still retains a sense of humor and remains hopeful about the future. He also like comic books, horror movies, Italian food, and has secret erotic fantasies about Noam Chomsky, Howard Zinn, and Murray Bookchin. He hopes you enjoy his work.

This is the story of Bob Dylan, but not the singer song-writer pop star Bob Dylan -even though that is a good story too. This is a story about another Bob Dylan. His parents named him after the folk singer because they thought it would be hip, and that this Bob Dylan was destined for great things like the "real" Bob Dylan. As it would turn out, they were half right. Bobby would do great things, but naming your kids after icons from the sixties is never hip.

Bobby was born in the late 1980s, and like most kids in his generation, he was raised by television. It is not that his parents didn't love him. They actually loved Bobby very much. It is just that his parents, like most people from their generation, didn't plan to have a kid. They didn't know what to do when poor little Bobby popped out, and sure as hell weren't ready for him. Plus, they were consumed with their own jobs and lives and didn't have the time to give Bobby the attention he needed. So, like most parents from their generation, they relied on the cheapest nanny they could find, the old boob-tube, to raise their one and only child.

Bobby didn't mind that his parents didn't have the time to raise him and that they left the responsibility to cable. Bobby had an abnormal affection for television. He watched it constantly. He flipped through channels endlessly. At the age of five, before his formal schooling would begin, he was able to recite word for word most reruns from *The Care Bears*, *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, and *Full House*. It was quite an accomplishment for a five year-old, but no one really noticed. Chronic TV watchers aren't exactly the most respected individuals, especially ones under the age of thirteen.

Memorizing television programs would be a minor accomplishment compared to Bob's other achievements. It all started around the age of seven. That was the year that

Bobby was supposed to leave his home and start school like the rest of the seven-year-olds in his town. But Bobby refused to go. He would kick and scream and holler and bite and yell and do everything that is little body could do to prevent his parents from dragging him to school. One time, Bobby escaped. The whole school was looking for him. His parents were notified at work, and soon after the police were called. Later, when his parents came home, they found the boy in front of the TV reciting lines along with an episode of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. After that his parents decided that it wasn't worth forcing the boy to go to school, and in the meantime, they would try to wean him off the TV.

Well, the weaning was unsuccessful. Mostly because weaning someone off of anything takes a lot of time, effort, and care, and those are things that Bobby's parents didn't have. So Bobby stayed in front of the TV, flipping through channels and memorizing programs.

It was in that year, when Bobby was seven, that something else happened - something truly phenomenal. Bobby started to read spontaneously as if he had done it from birth. This was unbelievable enough, but Bobby's case was truly remarkable. First, his book of choice was the first book of the Dylans' *Encyclopedia Britannica*; next, he didn't stop watching TV while he read. He placed the large book right underneath the family TV and stared at the old delicate pages and the soft glow of the TV screen at the same time.

His parents first thought Bobby was fooling around like seven-year-olds usually do. They were proven wrong when Bobby gave his parents in-depth information on the subjects he had read, like aardvarks, aerodynamics, and Aristotle, along with describing, line by line, what happened in the last episode of *Full House*.

His parents couldn't believe it. They thought their son was some type of child genius, and they were right. It didn't take long for Bobby to make his way through every single book, magazine, and newspaper in the house. After that, he started to make frequent trips to the local library by himself. He picked up massive books and devoured them along with old episodes of *Batman*.

By the time he was eight he had read so many books and was knowledgeable in such a wide variety of subjects that his parents figured it would be a disservice to send the boy to school. So Bobby was left to his own devices for several years. He finished off great works of literature and philosophy in front of the half-hour to an hour spits of American pop-culture pulsating through the thin glass screen.

At age nine-and-half things changed again for Bobby. His mother, while watching television with him in the living room, noticed a small bump on the back left-side of Bobby's head. She inquired about it, and Bobby replied that it was nothing. But the bump didn't go away. It appeared to be growing.

Bobby's mother started to get worried. She tried dragging Bobby to the doctors to have a look at it and find out exactly what it was. He protested against the idea and told her that it would cut into his television/reading/thinking time. Eventually, Bobby conceded and went with her. Bobby was not pleased, but he was touched by his mom's concern for him. She had actually taken an interest in his life. He didn't like being away from TV, but he appreciated his mother's love.

The doctors couldn't tell what caused the bump. It was soft but not squishy. Bobby wasn't in any pain or discomfort and that baffled them. After the x-rays, the CAT scan, countless tests, and examinations by an endless amount of specialists, the doctors developed an answer. Apparently the constant exposure to electro-magnetic waves at an early age from the television set had produced a tumor in Bobby's brain.

Tumors caused by electro-magnetic waves were actually fairly common. Bobby already knew that, of course.

The doctors deduced that Bobby was one of those people who were particularly sensitive to electro-magnetic waves, but his reaction was different. Bobby's tumor was definitely caused by the signals his body received from sitting in front of the TV all day, but instead of making him dumber, the tumor appeared give him intellectual abilities that were vastly outside the realm of anyone his age or the majority of people in the world.

"Is he in any danger?" Bobby's mother asked the doctors.

"We don't think so, his brain and the tumor appear to be functioning in a symbiotic relationship, where each one helps and supports the other," one of the doctors replied.

"Well what do you recommend we do?" Bobby's mother asked.

"Surgery of course," The doctors replied.

"What will surgery do? Will it hurt him?"

"No, no, no, we'll open up his skull, remove the tumor, and cut out a portion of the brain that it has grown into, and sew him back up. He will be fine," another one of the doctors said.

"That is really unnecessary. I'm actually quite fine and I think the tumor will continue function in harmony with my brain," Bobby added in, but of course no one listened.

"We need to remove the tumor. That thing has really got itself tangled up in his skull. Bobby will probably lose several of his emotions and language capacity, but he should retain much of his basic motor skills - enough to be a fine upright citizen," one of the doctors said, trying to soothe Mrs. Dylan.

It didn't matter though, Bobby's mother wasn't going to have the doctors open up her boy's head. He was perfect the way he was, as far as she was concerned, and he didn't need to be a "fine upright citizen." Bobby was opposed to the idea

too. He and his tumor had grown attached to each other, and not just in a literal sense. According to Bobby, the tumor was developing a character of its own, to such a degree that Bobby decided to give it a name. He began calling it Ted Koppel. Not because he necessarily admired the actual Ted Koppel. Bobby felt that most new anchor people were boring and bit foolish. He just liked the way it sounded when it rolled off your tongue: *Ted-Kop-pel*.

Well, Bobby didn't end up going through with the surgery, and he and his mother were fine with that. Instead, he stayed at home and watched TV. He would spend all of his day and a good portion of his night watching television and reading books. His mother would come downstairs to the living room late at night and find Bobby still stuck in front of the television with a book.

"Bob Dylan, what are you still doing up? You need to go to bed," she would say.

"I can't right now mom, I'm thinking with Ted Koppel," Bobby replied.

Eventually Bobby's mom gave up and let the boy stay up as late as he wanted. It wasn't long before all of Bobby's movements were reserved to a few actions. The only things that Bobby did were eat, go to the bathroom, exercise, and, of course, watch television and read books. His parents thought it strange that their only son led such a solitary life, especially at such a young age, but he was happy and he didn't seem to be developing any abnormal behaviors - that is, except for his superhuman intelligence and the fact that he talked to a tumor in his head.

Then, a few years later, another strange occurrence happened with Bobby and his tumor Ted Koppel. Bobby developed telekinetic powers. He could move things with the sheer force of his brain. It was as if Bobby had a special relationship with everything in his immediate environment and could command small inanimate objects to life.

At first his parents were worried. Who knew what Bobby was capable of now that he had telekinesis? But, as the years went by, Bobby and his family lived happily. Certain things remained the same: Bobby's parent went to work every weekday and went out with their friends every weekend, and Bobby spent his days in front of the television reading away the entire local library. On the other hand, other things slowly changed. Bobby's telekinetic powers became stronger over the years. He was able to not only move small objects, like pages in books, but heavy furniture. His parents would come home and find their entire house rearranged.

Over time, Bobby's powers were considered normal in the home and his parents and he spoke little of his ability to move things with his mind and Ted Koppel; that is, until the CIA showed up. When Bobby was around fourteen years old, two CIA agents showed up at the door and asked Bobby's mother if they could see her son. She invited them in, talked to them for a bit, and told them that her son wasn't home. That was true. He was out going for one of his brief walks. She told that she didn't think they needed to be there. That was also true. The CIA never *needs* to be anywhere. She asked them to leave and not come back. After some suspicious glances and murmurs to each other, one of the agents said "the eagle's home is without the egg" into his collar, and the CIA agents decided to leave.

When Bobby came home his mother told him what had happened. He told her he already knew. Bobby had predicted that CIA agents would be showing up at the door any day now. He picked up a radio signal from them. Apparently they had been watching the home for weeks in a big black van parked a few blocks away. That was why he decided to go for the walk when he did. He explained to his mother that the federal government had been using psychics to spy on the Russians for years. After the end of the cold war it was reported that Bill Clinton cut the program, but some believe it still existed in a more underground form. Since the adoption of the PATRIOT ACT the government was

looking into people's medical and library records to find more psychics. They had probably realized that Bobby had an abnormal medical history and extremely abnormal library history.

"How do you know all this?" Bobby's mom asked.

"Ted Koppel told me," Bobby said. "You know mom, not the one on the news, the one in my head."

From that point on, Bobby and his family lived a fairly routine life. For the next seven years, Bobby mostly stayed in front of the TV and his parents mostly went to work. But all that came to an end, when Bobby made a crucial decision at dinner one evening.

"Mom and Dad" he began, "in all my years of reading great works of literature by great people, I have come to two important truisms that have been ignored throughout history: that humanity is a power which must be activated through thoughtful action, and that institutions based on violence can never be trusted."

With that, Bob Dylan got up, left the dinner table, walked out the door, and was never seen by his parents again.

Years went by without any word from their son and Bobby's parents thought that he may be dead, but when they watched the news and read the paper they received small hints that their son was still very much alive and very busy. They would read stories about police unable to break-up protests because their pepper-spray, rubber bullets, and clubs would fly out of their hands and end up in some lake, towns away; or hear stories about bombs dropped by planes traveling upward toward the sun instead of onto some poor third-world nation. It was their belief that their son, single-handedly, stopped a small atomic bomb from being dropped on Iraq through a sudden two week shut-down of all military technology in the world. That was not all. Strange stories of sudden redistribution of wealth would occur. It was on the front page of every paper in America when Bill Gates

woke to discover his entire fortune missing. A week later, in what appeared to be a completely unrelated story, various nonprofits in America received large sums of money from an unknown source. Later, his parents heard of trees and wildlife spontaneous growing in cities throughout the world. Car production had stopped, the machines just wouldn't work, and the ozone, who knows how, started to improve. No one could explain this, but the Dylans knew that their son was behind it. There was no other explanation. Through Bobby's work the world was becoming a much better place to live; people learned to share, war was slowly becoming a thing of the past, and many nation-states tumbled with direct democracy taking their place.

Decades went by before Bobby's parents received any word from their son. By this time, they were both very old and approaching death. One day they found an envelope in the mailbox without a return address. Inside the envelope was this letter:

Dear My Beloved Parents,

I know I have not kept in touch with you for several decades, but at the age of 21, I discovered my life passion. I believe that if you were in my position you would have chosen the same course.

I have been doing well, and thanks to your parenting and support, I have grown-up to be a fine upright human. Thank you with all my love.

Ted would also like to thank you. He has grown so large over the years that he has actually ended up growing his own tumor named {Xui#iuX}. Ted told me he named his tumor that because he liked the way it looks on paper. All three of us have been engaging in a very interesting conversation on how traveling faster than the speed light (thus creating a time vision tunnel of past events) may be possible in the next 253-326 years, and how this will enhance our understanding of the relationship of preliterate societies to recent democratization movements.

Other than that, I do not have much more to say. I just want you to know that I love you both and that my thoughts are with you, and please go somewhere you love tomorrow and enjoy it.

*Your son,
Bob Dylan*

The next day both of Bobby's parents went to the beach. While lying on the sand, at the same time, they both had a heart attack and died. Their final thoughts were that though they had led fairly uneventful lives, they could be proud that they had a profound impact on their son, Bob Dylan - who was able to change the entire world by thinking with Ted Koppel.

~Postscript~

No matter who we are, we are all born with certain gifts - some are more phenomenal than others. With this in mind, there are only really two questions in life: what is each individual's particular gift, and how can that person best use that gift? The first question we can only answer on our own, but for the latter question we need others, a community of people, to help us answer. In the end, after all our searching, I believe that each of us will come to the same conclusion: by giving to others we give to ourselves, by seeing ourselves as part of a community (and eventually, by seeing ourselves as part of humanity) we realize the best in ourselves and maximize our fullest potential by doing good for others. That is the lesson to be learned from the story I wrote. The gifted character could have used his unique abilities to conquer the world, but instead he used them to overcome those who have conquered the world. His intelligence was granted by nature, but his sense of compassion was something that was developed by the people around him - specifically his parents; which means, in a way, that they are the real heroes of the story. What their actions show is that if we really want to form ourselves as individuals, then the best way to do so is to form the community around us. Parents give to children, and children give to the world.



Oscar Morera H.

*Acting Head of Information
Technologies at UPEACE,
Costa Rica*

*Oscar was born
in February 1970,
in a family concerned
about social change.
This helped him to look
at all of our differences
in the world,
the good
and the not-so-good.
Through his journey,
Oscar arrived to UPEACE
in 2004,
getting the chance to live
one of his childhood dreams
and work with others
to make this world a better
place.
And now,
he has learned more
about differences,
which he can safely
declare to be mostly good.*

Me asomo a tus ojos y te conozco.

I look into your eyes and I know you.

Me recuerdas al viento en mi cara,

You remind me of the wind in my face,

al sol en mi espalda, al frío en mis pies.

the sun on my back, the cold on my feet.

En tus pasos, reconozco el retumbo

In your steps, I recognize the sound

del andar milenario de las tribus.

of the one thousand-year-old march of the tribes.

En tus manos descubro las rutas

In your hands I discover the paths

de ancestrales navegantes en el cielo.

of the ancient navigators in the sky.

En tu piel adivino el olor

In your skin I discover the scent

de los bosques, los desiertos y los mares.

of the forests, the deserts, and the seas.

Los destellos de tormentas,

The intensity of storms,

los susurros de las hojas,

the whispers of the leaves,

el silencio de los pájaros.

the silence of the birds.

De tus sombras, levanto inventarios de recuerdos.

From your shadow, I collect an inventory of
memories.

Analizando los detalles que te alejan,

Analyzing the details that take you further away,

disecando los rincones que te acercan

Dissecting the corners that bring you closer

Desafiando convenciones.

Challenging conventions.

Ignorando las distancias.

Ignoring distances.

Aceptando diferencias.

Accepting differences.

Me asomo a tus ojos y te conozco

I look into your eyes and I know you.



Jessica Moe

I remember distinctly a certain frigid Montreal winter day, one of those cloudless frozen afternoons of piercing blue and heavy breath. An eclectic candlelit bohemian café became cozy refuge, populated by thawing people grasping mugs and bowls of steaming warmth, their skin tinted red and their spirits awakened by the cold. It was over a bowl of hot pea soup and conversation bubbling with ideas and inspiration that I met V. Her whole being exuded kindness, generosity, and youthful exuberance - the light cotton scarf wrapped loosely around her neck, hair pulled into a tousled bun, eyes that would twinkle and swell with unbridled excitement.

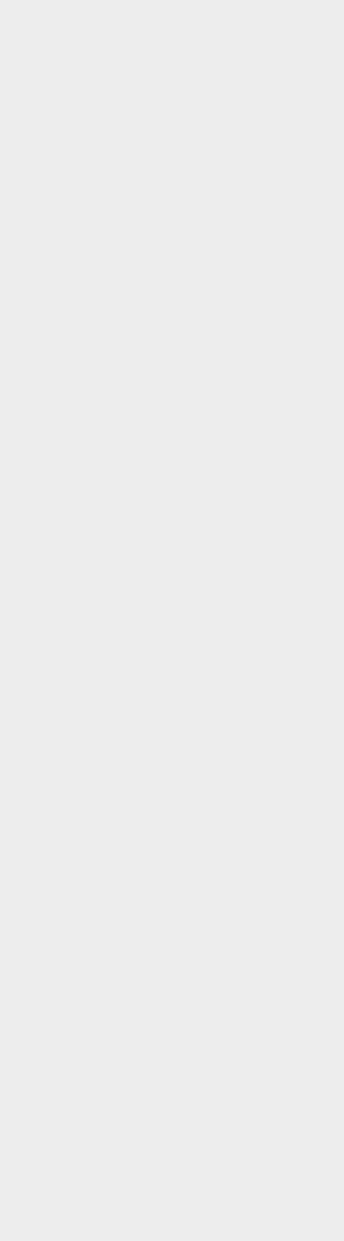
V was an architect by trade, but rather than physical structures, life had spun for her a path of building communities. She was an artist; her canvas a space, a possibility, her materials the people she drew with ease around her. Over the years, I came to know V as a dear friend and mentor. I became woven into the spaces she crafted as she became threaded into my own experience. She poured her heart into an organization that brought together volunteers and neighborhoods, children, adults and elderly, musicians, students, artists and businessmen. Diverse strands were held by a common goal - the physical and holistic nourishment of the community. Strangers became friends, brought together in their shared stewardship of a receptive and inviting common space. They often opened to one another over the warmth of baked goods or the sharing of songs, jokes, stories or ideas.

It was from V that I first came to see community as an entity to be crafted with care; in fact, it was the first time I was inspired to ponder the notion of community at all. To me, community had always been a given, the inconspicuous backdrop of a changing drama. V awoke in me a new

awareness; having moved to the big city, far from friends, family, and familiar, communities became newly apparent - the ones I had left behind, and those remaining to be built around me.

Through my travels and experiences, I have lived and observed many permutations of community, simultaneously distinct and similar in a striking way. Community is a group of transient farmers converging upon a secluded farm, bound by the common soil beneath work-worn nails. It is winter bikers on an ice-glazed street, knowingly saluting one another as they pedal head-on into freezing sleet. It is a gaggle of pregnant women, silently waiting their turn in the overcrowded maternity ward of a run-down hospital, held together by their fear of the unknown, their trepidation of that terrifying, terrible, uncertain joy in store. It is travelers, hailing from all corners of the globe, uniting to marvel at the expansiveness of the stars. It is the tacit understanding between surfers as they paddle, in almost reverential conversation with the ocean, out into open waters; they throw themselves at the mercy of breaking waves then stop to peacefully watch a glorious sunset, bound together by their wonder. As much as community is unification, it is separation. It is walls, gates, and barbed wire, of many manifestations, both physical and metaphorical; that visceral fear of the other that pushes us to shrink towards the familiar and erect barriers to keep out the foreign. It is antagonism, opposition, and differences. Community rises and falls, ebbs and flows, appears then evanesces; it is built, destroyed, and fades with time.

Community is unmistakably felt, but difficult to define. What is the invisible and potent force that binds people together and apart? Solidarity, empathy, common experience, fear? At its basis, community implies something communal,



something shared. It is this sharing that highlights a thread of commonality through our spectacular differences. These commonalities reflect both our potential and our frailties, for just as community may arise organically or as a manifestation of creative energy, it may be a coagulation, a pulling away of the elements of a whole into themselves, of people cowering inwards in the face of difference or uncertainty.

What is undeniable, however, is the constructive possibility evoked by the idea of community. This is what V taught me over the many cups of tea that we shared: community as a structure within which people may be brought together. While we may live on different streets or distant continents, while we may worry or find joy in the diverging circumstances of our mosaic lives, while we may enjoy our toast buttered or plain or not eat toast at all, we are bound together in the enjoyment of others' company, the sharing of a cozy space, the warming of our bellies, our fear of the unknown, or the common appreciation of a marvel.

This is the wonder of the phenomenon of community: that shared humanity can shine through diversity, that people brought together can create an entity somehow beyond the sum of its parts. It is our common joy, pride, respect, fear or awe with the sun and the stars that allows us to find a deeper understanding of our collective selves, and it is in reflecting carefully on this process that we may become aware of our creative potential.



Karim El Mantawi
Student, Egypt

Karim El Mantawi is a Master of Arts candidate at the University for Peace, studying Media, Peace and Conflict studies. His research focuses on media literacy for international high schools, and his passion lies in empowering youth to participate in media production as a means to bring about social change.

To one who has lived in seven nations across four continents in nearly 30 years, a global nomad, the notion of community is a vast, open terrain. Beyond language, belief, ethnicity, or borders lies the most basic community: the simple core of the terrestrial nuclear family; the community of human beings.

Respecting and caring for the community of life, a community that encompasses our maternal home with all of her natural beings, must begin with respect and care for one's own species. Our species transcends borders, and if we look far enough, in the expanse of our settled horizons, we will find the most miniscule of communities: that of humankind. These humans, my family, are the community to which I belong, with which I identify, and from whom I draw my strength. My nation is humanity, my respect reserved for equal distribution, and my care is for the common good.

Our small community, fragmented and interdependent, with its great potential, mustn't lose sight of the simple core. It mustn't be engrossed in identity and pride, nationalism, patriotism, and other '-isms'. Instead, our fundamental traits must be celebrated. Culture and arts must be nourished, celebrated, and exported. Through familiarity with our global extended family, we deter dehumanization of the other. Their

music, their dance, their poetry, their faith, and their soul - all are similar and all are ours. A spirit of solidarity arises.

Respect and care mustn't be reserved for our own nationals. They must be shared generously amongst the whole family, and wherever I may go, they may ask me, "Where are you from?" And I shall reply, "I am from here."

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- Musings	Mauricio Mireles



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Tina Maria believes there is nothing new under the sun (nihil novi sub sole).



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Takako Ueda was born in Ibaraki, Japan. She graduated with a B.A. in Sociology and an M.A. in Area studies (European Studies) in Japan, and studied International Relations in England as an exchange student. Takako worked in Miloradz and Lodz, Poland for 2 years with the Japan Overseas Cooperative Volunteers (JOCV) of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). She is currently a student of the University for Peace Dual-Campus M.A. in International Peace Studies.



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Aimee Gaines grew up in rural Ohio, USA; a barefoot childhood spent mostly exploring forests and creek beds. Since those times, she has pursued an undergraduate degree in natural and environmental science and has expanded her stomping grounds to include Haiti, where she lived for over two years as a Peace Corps volunteer, and Hawaii, where she worked for two years as a grassroots organizer for various environmental NGOs. She is currently working toward a master's degree in Natural Resources and Peace at the University for Peace in Costa Rica.



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Keiko Sasaki studies in the International Peace Studies Dual Campus program at the University for Peace in both Costa Rica and the Philippines. Before she joined the University, she worked with foreign children struggling to integrate into Japanese society. She is interested in the rights of ethnic, linguistic, sexual, disabled, and other minority groups. She loves coffee, chocolate, movies, music, and cats!



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States

Federico is interning at UPEACE with Peace Education. He believes that one can only change the world by changing oneself. He loves to jiggle the pattern, i.e. create.

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Born in Salvador, Brazil in 1983, Julio Silva is currently undertaking an M.A. in International Law and Human Rights at the UN-mandated University for Peace, after serving as an international technical advisor for the Presidency of his country. He holds a B.A. in International Relations from the University of Brasilia, and is fluent in Portuguese, English, Spanish, and has working skills in French. Julio's experience at UPEACE is one of his major steps in the pursuit of a career as an international lawyer. In 2008, he plans to advance further along his career path by attending law school to become a solicitor in the United Kingdom.

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"The Earth Charter Initiative" is the collective name for the extraordinarily diverse, global network of people, organizations, and institutions that participate in promoting and implementing the values and principles of the Earth Charter. The Initiative is a broad-based, voluntary, civil society effort. Participants include leading international institutions, national governments and their agencies, university associations, non-government organizations and community-based groups, city governments, faith groups, schools and businesses — as well as thousands of individuals.

The mission of the Earth Charter Initiative is to help establish a sound ethical foundation for the emerging global society and to promote the transition to a sustainable way of life founded on: respect and care for the community of life; ecological integrity; universal human rights; respect for diversity; economic justice; democracy; and a culture of peace. For more information about the Earth Charter, please visit www.earthcharter.org

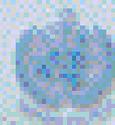
The mission of *the University for Peace* is to provide humanity with an international institution of higher education for peace with the aim of promoting among human beings a spirit of understanding, tolerance and peaceful coexistence, to stimulate cooperation among peoples and to help lessen obstacles and threats to world peace and progress, in keeping with the noble aspirations proclaimed in the Charter of the United Nations.

United Nations General Assembly resolution 35/55

Plan Netherlands, part of Plan International, provides generous financial support to Earth Charter International. Plan's vision is to live in a world in which all children realize their potential in societies which respect people's rights and dignity. Plan's mission is to achieve lasting improvements in the quality of life of deprived children in developing countries, through a process that unites people across cultures and adds meaning and value to their lives, by enabling deprived children, their families and their communities to meet their basic needs and to increase their ability to participate in and benefit from their societies; building relationships to increase understanding and unity among peoples of different cultures and countries; and promoting the rights and interests of the world's children. To learn more about Plan Netherlands, please visit www.plannederland.nl



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