

CIL'S MISSION

CIL provides an international forum for local grassroots groups to participate in dialogue across social, economic, religious, and ethnic boundaries. This kind of dialogue enables local groups to analyze their own situations from an international perspective and encourages new possibilities for mutual understanding and cooperation. The center was founded in 1985 by people from the Philippines, the USA and Germany.



CIL/USA dialogue
A CIL Newsletter

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Conflict and Peace at the IIPE

by Peggy Ray

Although I had been planning the trip for months, I was amazed to find myself in August among the Byzantine church domes and Islamic minarets of Istanbul. In the seat of Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman empires where East and West had clashed and melded for centuries, I was attending an institute for peacemakers.

I came because "Human Security: Building Cultures of Peace," the theme of this year's International Institute for Peace Educators (IIPE), co-sponsored by Teachers College of Columbia University and Sabanci University, matched CIL's current dialogue, "Security: How Can We All Have It?"

As "critical thinking" is one of the foundational principles of peace education, I should not have been surprised that the entire concept of "human security" would be questioned on the first day. But it was and the discussion was interesting. "Peace" is a dynamic and sometimes conflicted process.

Is Security Possible?

Conflict emerged in the first workshop I attended (out of 30 that were offered during the week). In my small group considering the value of "human security" as an organizing concept, an Iraqi Kurd declared that it was obvious to him that peace requires human security: "People need essential services, jobs, their rights, food, respect for all religions...." Yet another small group reported their doubts about the idea. A Turk, whose country recently has been faulted for abusing and displacing Kurds in the name of "security," said the word had negative implications in his country. An American wondered if "security" isn't a middle-class mirage, in which case our CIL dialogue should be re-named "Security: Can We Have It At All?"

Another difference in points of view arose in the first session of my Reflection Group. Reflection Groups consisted of nine or 10 people who met each day to think about the day's learnings. A Turkish man started off the

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Sr. Judith Savard, RSHM, a dear friend and loyal supporter of CIL, died suddenly on May 23. Judith, an artist, designed CIL's first logo and generously assisted in many other ways after CIL/USA incorporated in 1991. She firmly believed that death is a part of life and that she continues with us.

Dialogue in Frankfurt About CIL

by Kathleen Kanet

For several days in mid July three members of the Board and staff of CIL/USA (Virginia Dorgan, Peggy Ray and me) met with representative members of the Speakers Group (Board) and staff of CIL International in Frankfurt, Germany. We made the trip to clarify and renew the relationship between our two groups.

A little history: CIL began in 1985 when members of peace and justice communities in the Philippines, Germany and the USA met to develop an institution which would confront militarization and promote democratic processes. Grassroot groups would be brought together internationally for dialogue and learning in order to promote peace in the world, especially the world right around them.

For several years representatives from each country met every two years and worked on common programs. The organization then was called the Christian Initiative Center of International Learning.

CIL/USA Is Born

After CIL/USA incorporated independently in 1991, it began to develop separate programs. In the mid 90's the Board of Directors of CIL/USA decided that the title of the organization in U.S. culture could be interpreted as divisive or exclusionary. Thus they decided to make a name change to the Center of International Learning. Interestingly, this was viewed by the German partners as a denial of our identity and a point of separation from them (as indeed the initiators were all Christian).

At our meeting in July, it became clear that this was still disturbing to the Germans. After some discussion of this conflict, a question for both groups to consider became: What does spirituality have to do with what we do? How does it manifest itself?

Other important questions surfaced: What are the connecting points in our aims and activities? How do we communicate with one another? How do we find the right description of what we do?

Coming Up

Sept. 28: Living Room Dialogue. Northern Ukraine as seen through the eyes of Jim Hundrieser, a recent visitor. 6:30 pm, 240 E. 93d St., #3H. Bring light refreshments to share.

Oct. 21: Living Room Dialogue. Election Forum: CIL will bring together voters with differing views to listen to (and not debate) one another. 6:30 pm, place to be determined.

Oct. 27: Annual Recognition Night. Guy Bennett of Christie's will return to conduct the live auction of international items. See details on p. 5.

Dec. 9: Living Room Dialogue. An update on Sr. Tibebe's HIV/AIDS program in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. 6:30 pm, 240 E. 93d St., #3H. Bring light refreshments to share.

How do we deal with our feelings of misunderstanding? How now do we define our relationship and identify the points of connection?

A proposal was accepted by the representatives who will now return to their governing bodies. It recommends that some members of both CILs meet regularly (perhaps every other year) to consider goals and strategies for international learning. We may also invite other groups which are also engaged in similar efforts to join in these deliberations.

We returned confident that this long and fruitful relationship will continue.

The Center of international Learning is a 501(c)3 organization and depends on individual contributions. Any contribution you can make in cash, stock, or a bequest will help to further our work. The address and phone number are on the cover of this newsletter. Thank you.

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the group with his questions: “Is it possible to create a peaceful state? Is peace in our hands or other hands? Can we protect peace without weapons?” This group also included a Kurd who had suffered jailing and torture at the hands of Turks. Her first observation was that for her, humans need security FROM the state, and her initial, skeptical question was: “How have civil initiatives made a step for peace?” Although the perspectives of these two people remained in tension throughout the week, the whole group learned from the encounter.

Just as Turk met Kurd in our Reflection Group, other participants from groups in conflict had opportunities to talk – Indian and Pakistani, Israeli and Palestinian, for example. Important for me were opportunities to meet people from the former USSR (Lithuanians, an Estonian, a Ukrainian, three Georgians, a Chechen refugee from Kazakhstan), three people from Iraq and one from Afghanistan. I was quite relieved that all of these people greeted me with friendship and the expectation that we can move on together.

Participants came from 22 countries, from East, West and points in between, from places devastated by years of war, places poised on the brink of war and places where people live in mortal fear of attack even though war is not near them. They came to replenish their spirits and renew their hopes for a more peaceful future.

Some knew each other from previous sessions

of the Institute, which the Peace Studies program at Teachers College, Columbia University, has sponsored annually for 23 years. Others were meeting for the first time. By the end of a week of both learning and celebration, disparate participants had become a community strengthened by bonds of shared sorrow and commitment.

Sabancı University, a new and innovative institution endowed by a wealthy Turkish industrialist to promote civic involvement, intellectual curiosity and broad perspective in its graduates, provided generous support for the Institute. The Sabancı organizing team included students who added youthful energy and fun to the proceedings.

In the concluding session, Betty Reardon, the founder of the Peace Studies program at Teachers College, offered a public reconciliation statement to Sakena Yakoobi from Afghanistan. She apologized for the neglect of the cries of Afghan women for so many years and pledged future solidarity. Sakena accepted this apology and said she looked forward to joint initiatives.

On the last night, we all enjoyed a boat excursion on the Bosphorus, complete with food, music and dancing. Lights brightened both European and Asian shores, with palaces, hotels, cafes and business offices on the European side, industry and telecommunication towers on the Asian. The moment offered a hopeful prospect. Peace, defined as the acceptance of diverse points of view and the willingness to address differences without violence, was with us in Istanbul.

Community and Difference?

by Ute Wannig

Kathleen Kanet and I were asked to write short reflections about our meeting in Frankfurt. Contemplating this task, I decided to use Kathleen's and my own words when our group was asked to describe CIL as if it were an animal or a food. It was fun and serious and worth a deeper look. I hand them on to you readers of the CIL/USA newsletter for your evaluation.

What do the hidden stories of Kathleen's and Ute's animal/food choices show about how they conceive of CIL?

Kathleen

Giraffe — stands tall; sees what other animals don't; runs fast; is not a predator

Bread — universal but comes in lots of varieties; nourishing but sometimes not; life-giving; shows hospitality; common symbol of the sacred

Ute

Cheetah — very fast; elegant hunter; in between a meow and a tiger; child of the savanna; hardly settled

Tropical Fruit — has different segments; has transparent greenish/yellowish color; appears meatless and colorless. Is this thing only beautiful? Taste: I don't know. Name: I don't know. Question: How shall I eat this fruit?

Insights from the Parliament of the World's Religions

By Virginia Dorgan

“Pathways to Peace: the Wisdom of Listening, the Power of Commitment” was the title given to the 2004 Parliament of the World's Religions which I attended in July. More than 5,000 people gathered in Barcelona's Universal Forum of Cultures site for an entire week of activities.

I will focus on a few of my major insights.

Religious Fundamentalism, the topic that CIL explored in the years prior to 1992, was addressed in a session by Karen Armstrong, author of *The History of God*, and Michael Lerner of the Jewish publication *Tikkun*. Both of them reflected on religion in this secular age. Karen thought that the rise in fundamentalism in all faiths, Muslim, Christian and Jewish, is a modern movement, not a retreat into tradition, to assert belief in our predominantly secular society. It is characterized by the desire to establish a closed society in order to live by common values.

This is similar to the motivations of the Christian Evangelical groups that CIL visited in Nicaragua in 1992. In that case, the Evangelicals set themselves apart from the more pluralistic Catholic community which was very tied to the traditional land owners. The Evangelical groups were small (and sometimes not so small), intense and familial communities often funded by Christian groups in the United States.

Michael Lerner saw the predominant secular culture as fundamentalist itself in its closed absoluteness of belief. He said that the modern challenge for religious groups and secularists was to collaborate on peaceful coexistence, de-militarization and environmental preservation.

For two days I participated in a special symposium entitled “**Creating Access to Clean Water.**” After gathering experiences from the group about problems and solutions in this environmental crisis, facilitators encouraged a commitment from each participant. I agreed to advocate for a Water Forum at Marymount Manhattan College in the spring semester, 2005 by asking the Biology, Art, Ethics, Religious Studies, Political Science, Earth Science, Business, etc. departments to jointly focus on water access and make a common presentation. All who were engaged in the CIL sustainability work of 1999-2002 would be invited.

I was glad to find out about the **Pluralism Project** headed by Diana Eck of Harvard which tracks the growth of religious diversity in the U.S. and was soothed by the peaceful spirit and voice of **Joanne Shennandoah**, a Native American of the Oneida Nation. I even found out about some things happening in our own backyard, for example that the theater group **Dzieci** which presented an interactive drama called *A Fools Mass* comes from Brooklyn; that the young rabbi I partnered with at the Interfaith Education Symposium works with an interfaith youth camp organized at the **Auburn Seminary** on the Upper West Side of Manhattan.

And people very close to CIL were present and prominent: **Betty Reardon**, peace educator and honoree of CIL last year, was highlighted in the Symposium on Interfaith Education, and **Macky Alston**, brother of former Board member Laine Alston, led the Film Forum at the Parliament.

This Parliament was an uplifting experience for me, supporting the values of CIL, crossing boundaries and encouraging new possibilities for mutual understanding and cooperation.

You Are Invited To Attend

CIL's Annual Recognition Night

October 27, 2004

Honoring Ed Gragert and iEARN

And featuring a live auction with many international items as well as delicious refreshments



Edwin H. Gragert, Ph.D.

Edwin H. Gragert directs iEARN-USA. Under his leadership, iEARN (International Education and Resource Network) has become the world's largest K-12 project-based, internet-supported learning network. He has led this project since 1990.

Prior to this, he directed an international youth exchange program for 11 years. After completing his Masters in Korean history at Columbia University, he completed a doctorate in Japanese history. He is the author of *Landownership Under Colonial Rule: Korea's Japanese Experience*.

iEARN was initiated in 1988 when students in New York State and Moscow exchanged their first e-mail messages by nightly long distance dial-up calls using pre-WWII computers. Now, using today's highly sophisticated technology, an estimated one million young people from 109 countries participate in more than 150 on-line projects.

iEARN's mission is to help young people make a meaningful contribution to the health and welfare of people and the planet as part of the learning process. Giving youth a voice is its guiding principle, as well as honoring diversity, taking action and building partnerships.



Call CIL at 212-426-5818 to reserve your space.

Suggested donation \$75

CIL is a 501c3 organization

Thank you!



Participants at the annual International Institute of Peace Educators, held this year in Istanbul, enjoyed a boat excursion on the Bosphorus after concluding their work. See story on p. 1.

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