

# Dialogue

*Newsletter of the Network for Peace through Dialogue*

**Mission:**

**Network for Peace through Dialogue creates opportunities for individuals and groups to engage in constructive conversation in an atmosphere of openness and mutual respect.**



**Editorial team**  
**Peggy Ray**  
**Virginia Dorgan, RSHM**  
**Larry Jones**

**Network for Peace through Dialogue**  
240 East 93rd Street #3H  
New York, NY 10128

Phone (212) 426- 5818  
Fax (212) 987-3575  
email:

info@networkforpeace.com  
website:  
www.networkforpeace.com

## **“Network for Peace” Records to be Archived at the Schlesinger Library**

We have some very good news to share: The Schlesinger Library at Harvard has offered to archive our papers and website. This research library is dedicated to the history of women in the United States. As we are an organization founded and run by women, how our programs were developed and implemented over the years is of interest to the library. Researchers from around the world will be able to access records of our activities.

Network for Peace through Dialogue (formerly the Center of International Learning) was begun in 1985 when some sociologists, theologians, and educators from Germany, the Philippines and the United States who were united by their commitment to dialogue decided to participate in transformative change. The Center provided ongoing learning, analysis and collaboration between people of the Northern and Southern hemispheres. Their major concerns were to promote democratic processes and de-militarization.

Initial international workshops were: 1988 - U.S. Bases in the Home Land, Philippines; 1989 - Fascism & Traces in Modern Society, Berlin, Germany; 1990 - Economic Conversion & Grassroots Participation, Rocky Flats, Colorado, USA; 1992 - Religious Fundamentalism & Its Impact on Democratic Grassroots Movements, Managua, Nicaragua; 1997 -What Do People Need? a focus on environmental justice, Accra, Ghana.

In 2002 an international workshop, Neighborhood by Neighborhood: How can we build a sustainable world?, was led by the U.S. group and held in New York City. The deep involvement of New Yorkers and the realization that there was great need to develop international understanding and dialogue in the United States, gave rise to a more local concentration of work and a change of name for the U.S. branch. We became the Network for Peace through Dialogue. With this new focus, we implemented 10 years of leadership training for youth in Harlem culminating in a youth-led, city-wide conference, sponsored two national conferences on dialogue, and held countless Living Room Dialogues. Most recently we have focused on issues of human trafficking and care for our Earth.

All of our planning documents, reports and brochures will be sent to the Library. They will also “harvest” our website. We are very pleased to make this information available for many to see.

—Virginia Dorgan, RSHM

## From the Director

We have been buoyed by Pope Francis' visit to New York and his encyclical *Laudato Si: Care for Our Common Home*. For the last year our focus has been on care of the Earth through the project we call Our Common Ground, and the Pope's message underscored the urgency and importance of that work.

In order to encourage careful reading of the encyclical, we have been taking passages from particular chapters for consideration in Living Room Dialogues. There have been three of these so far. As usual, Peggy Ray has been documenting the sessions which are afterward posted on our website. All of the reflections on the sessions held so far can be found at

[http://www.networkforpeace.com/what/lrd\\_past/2015/](http://www.networkforpeace.com/what/lrd_past/2015/)

On December 3, the fourth and final session in this series will focus on Chapter 5, "Lines of Approach and Action." The subsequent report on the website will reveal actions the group considers doable and effective.

### Recognition Night

On October 22 we honored Friends of Van Cortlandt Park at our annual Recognition Night. Once again we were hosted by Marymount School of NY for which we were very grateful. Exquisite auction items were donated by people in our network. A team of volunteers set the place up in one hour with refreshments, drinks, silent auction and live auction tables. The ceremony began, as it has for many years, with a beautiful song by the Marymount Chamber Choir led by Mario Dell Olio. Our auctioneer, Eugene Flinn, creatively led our Live Auction with great energy. Great thanks to the many people who contributed to this, our major fundraiser of the year.

### Preparing papers for the Schlesinger Library

As reported on page 1 of this newsletter, Harvard's Schlesinger Library will be archiving our records. Alexa Van Gilder has already begun sorting through the 12 file boxes of material that we have accumulated so that we can send the requested documents to Cambridge. Pictured at right are myself, Mary Brown, archivist at Marymount Manhattan College, and Alexa beginning the task.

—Virginia Dorgan, RSHM

## Coming up

**Thursday, December 3, 6:30 to 9:30 pm**

*Laudato Si* "Lines of Approach and Action" (Ch. 5)

240 E. 93d St., Apt. 3H

Please bring a snack to share

RSVP by calling 212-426-5815

Monthly Living Room Dialogues in 2016 related to Our Common Ground project addressing issues of war, peace, armament and human trafficking.

**Thursday, January 21; Wednesday,**

**February 24; Tuesday, March 15;**

**Thursday, April 14; Tuesday, May 17;**

**Wednesday, June 15.**

Watch for details in our e-mails

**Tuesday, February 2, 2016, 7 to 9 pm**

Forum on Human Trafficking: Analysis and Action Plan

Holy Trinity Catholic Church, Murphy Center, 213 W 82nd Street

RSVP: [holytrinityreled@earthlink.net](mailto:holytrinityreled@earthlink.net)

Cost: a good will offering

**March, 2016** Participation with the UN's Commission on the Status of Women (CSW); watch for events and reports in our e-mails, Facebook and on our website.

**Friday, April 22 -Earth Day Celebrations**



**Network for Peace through Dialogue 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.**

## Living Room Dialogues On Climate Change

By Peggy Ray

I prefer old-fashioned Living Room Dialogues in three-dimensions to the flat-screen digital world, so the discussions we've had about technology in these following Pope-Francis' encyclical on climate change have been interesting to me. While acknowledging the benefits of technology, those of us who are upwards in years tend to be more critical of it than the younger ones.

Here are some comments on this subject made in recent dialogues by grey-haired ones:

--Everything is expected to move quickly. Speed is the ultimate idea of quality, ignoring what is of long-term value. It's wonderful to fly around the world in X number of hours, but you miss most of it.

--At my bank there used to be many tellers. They have been replaced by ATMs. The ATMs are handy but put people out of work. The brick and mortar stores are becoming obsolete because people are shopping online. People are being excessed.

--The rapid globalization leads to the production of stuff that mostly goes to waste. This also has led to a rapid increase of income inequality. Billions are living on less than \$1 a day and it is not sustainable. The whole paradigm needs to be changed so people look for other ways to be happy in life besides having the latest model of phone.

--I just came from a classroom where students were discussing the refugee problem. It was wonderful to see them in a face-to-face conversation instead of texting. I think we need to make them put away the electronic things so they can experience the satisfaction of face-to-face communication.

--We can see the value of a lot of it, such as in treating diseases, and we have developed the belief that machines can solve everything. But just because something can be done doesn't mean we have to do it. The encyclical says: "...our immense technological development has not been accompanied by development in human responsibility, values and conscience." There needs to be training in human values.

Bravo, grey-haired ones!

## Skype Dialogues, What are they?

By Maisha Todd

"Skype Dialogues" is a part of the Common Ground Project. I think of it as a very important part of the project. Not only does it concern our current theme of humanity's relationship to Earth, but also our core belief in dialogue as a great tool to *save* the world. This world, *all* of it, is very accessible to us now.

After watching people sitting thousands of miles away from each other doing Google Hangouts and having one-on-one Skype conversations online (recorded and put on YouTube), I understood how necessary it was for us to take advantage of today's technology.

Since then we virtually met with 13 people from places like New York, Nepal, Bangladesh and Philippines. We all have one thing in common, our love for the Earth. This project is still expanding and we will be interviewing more and more people as time goes by. These recorded dialogues can be accessed in our online resource library (go to [networkforpeace.com](http://networkforpeace.com)) as well as our YouTube channel "Network for Peace through Dialogue"

There is a lot of wisdom to gain from these people. I gained hope from seeing how the very passionate older generation has inspired the younger generation to take drastic action to address today's environmental concerns.

**Maisha Todd  
(corner right)  
interviewing Philip-  
pine climate activist  
Marvie Misolas MM  
on Skype**



## Abstinence, Fasting and Climate Change

**Network for Peace has held three Living Room Dialogues on Pope Francis' encyclical "Laudato Si: On Care for our Common Home" since it was released in June. Following is a reflection on the encyclical by a dialogue participant.**

Pope Francis has called for a new dialogue about the fate of the earth, and in the spirit of his namesake he's invited everyone to participate, including the earth herself as our sister and mother along with all of her creatures as our brothers and sisters. The goal of the unfolding conversation, Francis writes in his encyclical, is "to turn what is happening to the world into our own personal suffering and thus discover what each of us can do about it." And so, he hopes, painful awareness will spur action.

"The climate," proclaims the pope, "is a common good, belonging to all and meant for all." Elsewhere he identifies the common good as the central and unifying principle of social ethics. Repeatedly he calls the earth our common home, which, he laments, is falling into disrepair so severe that radical change is needed as well as "an agreement on systems of governance for the whole range of so-called 'global commons.'" "The gravity of the ecological crisis," he insists, "demands that we all look to the common good, embarking on a path of dialogue which demands patience, self-discipline and generosity, always keeping in mind that 'realities are greater than ideas.'"

What's essential for positive change, he claims, is "disinterested concern for others, and the rejection of every form of self-centeredness and self-absorption." Overcoming individualism is necessary if we're going to develop a balanced lifestyle and transform society. "We can," he warns us, "no longer view reality in a purely utilitarian way." The earth and her creatures have an intrinsic value independent of their usefulness. As Jesus said of the birds of the air: "not one of them is forgotten before God." (*Luke 12:16*) "How then," asks the pope, "can we possibly mistreat them or cause them harm?" But if that's true, Holy Father, then how can we kill and eat them?

Oddly, Pope Francis never explicitly invokes the ancient Christian traditions of abstinence and fasting. Early Christians abstained from all food, and later specifically from meat, on Wednesdays and Fridays and during Lent. The Church often encouraged fasts with indulgences and other symbolic affirmations and could do so again in order to protect our common home. Industrialized animal agriculture is one of the main drivers of global warming, so why not simply revive the tradition of abstinence to reduce meat consumption? And why not expand the concept of fasting to include fossil fuels and other harmful products and processes? Why shouldn't we abstain from everything that degrades the earth, and boycott all of the polluters?

**COMMENTS: Continue the dialogue. If this article provokes thoughts pro or con, please email your comments to [info@networkforpeace.com](mailto:info@networkforpeace.com) and we will publish them on our blog. Full reports of the dialogues on the encyclical held so far can be found on our website: [www.networkforpeace.com](http://www.networkforpeace.com).**

\*\*\*\*\*

**"We have forgotten that we ourselves are dust of the earth; our very bodies made up of her elements, we breathe her air and receive life and refreshment from her waters." — Pope Francis**

## Friends of Van Cortlandt Park Honored at Recognition Night

Friends of Van Cortlandt Park was honored at this year's Recognition Night for its work connecting people with the woodlands and trails of a wonderful Bronx park. In 2014 its hard-working staff of three served 6,136 adults and children in various programs; worked with over 1,000 volunteers on garden, forest, and trail restoration projects; reached 1,778 students through its Van Cortlandt Adventures educational programs, and hired 18 teen-aged interns to work on forest projects and to run two farm stands bringing fresh produce into the community.

This demonstration of interest and care for the Earth is a far cry from the situation of the park during the 1970s and 1980s. New York City was in dire financial condition then, the budget for parks was cut to the bone, and parks deteriorated. Christina Taylor, now the Friend's executive director, has heard tales of homeless people living in shanties at the eastern edge of the park, piles of trash throughout, and large sections considered unsafe.

The Friends organization was born in 1992 when Felicity Nitz read a New York Times article about the neglect of parks in the boroughs. Van Cortlandt Park, at 1,146 acres the third largest park in the city, needed friends, the article said. Ms. Nitz decided she would become one of those friends and found others friends to join her. They began their project modestly, hiring a few teen-agers to pick up litter.

Christina Taylor knows first-hand that contact with the natural world early in life can lead to a deep commitment to caring for the land. As a child she loved to play in the woods behind her family's home. When it came time to go to college, she knew she wanted to work outdoors and chose SUNY's College of Environmental Science and Forestry. A few years after graduation she found employment with Friends of Van Cortlandt Park.

Now she can introduce urban youth to the pleasures contact with the natural world can bring. School children and teen-agers can learn the basics of forest ecology, our requirements for survival, animal habitats and the web of life. They may have an opportunity to plant trees and shrubs along a trail to help restore it. Or they may play the role of an aquatic biologist to determine just how healthy Van Cortlandt Lake is, testing its pH, dissolved oxygen, turbidity, etc.

The Friends offer tours and hikes through the park as well as volunteer opportunities for adults. You can find out more about their wonderful programs at [www.vancortlandt.org](http://www.vancortlandt.org).



**Christina Taylor**



**Jonah and Ryan learning to garden**



**Shanique Williams and Treyvor Hines getting ready for sales at one of two youth-run farm stands**

---

**Network for Peace  
through Dialogue**

*240 E. 93 St. #3H  
New York, NY 10128  
Telephone 212-426-5818*

---

**Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
Permit No. 5432  
White Plains, NY**



**Friends of Van Cortlandt Park was honored at this year's Recognition Night. Pictured here are (l to r): Friends staff members John Butler, Sara Kempton, and Director Christina Taylor, Network representative Peggy Ray, Friends board members Irene Fleming and Doris Spencer. Story inside on p. 5.**