

Network for Peace through Dialogue (originally CIL) was founded in 1985 by people from the Philippines, the USA and Germany.



Dialogue Journal
A N4PD Newsletter

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Katrina: What Does the Storm Teach Us?

Hurricane Katrina ripped the mask off of the poverty and festering racism that exists in the United States. This disaster forced us to look at these issues and especially how they have affected children. In a recent Living Room Dialogue, Kathleen Kanet asked participants to question social structures through the lens of the storm. The following report of that meeting was written by Kristen Zurek, notetaker for the evening.

Introduction

Kathleen showed pictures of children on the rooftops of their former homes and in the Superdome with their families. We continue to see the suffering to this day, and, recently, the Children's Defense Fund has issued a Call to Conscience and Action regarding these terrible situations. Most of the concern lies with the children's physical and mental health.

According to Dr. Raymond Crowel, Vice President, Mental Health and Substance Services at the National Mental Health Association, "The psychological impact of Katrina is unparalleled to any disaster we've had in America, especially for our children. What this means for Katrina's children is that, minimally, 30,000 or 50,000 children are now dealing with emotional issues...up to an additional 500,000 children are struggling with the loss of not only family, but homes and neighborhoods that have been destroyed along with the very fabric of their community...The trauma experienced by these children may result in increased rates of divorce, drug abuse, alcoholism and high unemployment as they become adults."

Kathleen went on to discuss poverty statistics. Many in the group could not believe that 37 million Americans are living below the poverty line and that 13 million are children. It was also disturbing to hear that parents who earn minimum wage still cannot cover the most basic expenses.

Interpreting Levels of Reality

The key to turning this situation around is structural change. Kathleen explained that there are three levels of reality: personal, interpersonal, and structural. Even though all levels are integral, we are only beginning to see humanity through social structures, and we too often allow structures to do to others what we would never do to them personally. And if we are not involved in trying to change unjust structures, then we are not living a good and just life.

On a personal level, we may see children and families living in poverty and think, "They are poor because they are lazy, irresponsible, drug addicted, etc." On the interpersonal level, we might think, "They are victims of poor parenting, poor education, poor nutrition, etc."

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From the Director

Our New Name

Since our last issue, there has been a lot of significant movement in our organization. What was CIL (Center of International Learning) is now Network for Peace through Dialogue, Inc. We are trying N4PD as an acronym so we will not look like the Norfolk or Newark Police Department. Though this is a bit awkward, we hope it is catchy. What do you think?

This major change was made by the Board of Directors as a result of a week-end retreat led by volunteer consultant Pat Jobling. Board members expressed frustration that the former name did not give a clear indication of the organization's work. Since dialogue is our most consistent practice, process and product, and we foster dialogue to help bring about unity and peace, the new name seemed more fitting.

Conference Planned

With renewed focus on our mission, the retreat process also resulted in a decision to sponsor a conference on dialogue. This conference will include other groups promoting dialogue as well as groups striving to bring about social justice and change also interested in learning more about the dialogue process. With collaborators from the American Friends Service Committee, the Peace Education Program of Teachers College at Columbia University, and Marymount Manhattan College, plans are beginning with hopes of holding the conference in Summer, 2007.

Program Development

Through a grant from the William T. Grant Foundation, our youth program Crossing Boundaries has conducted three successful forums designed to engage youth in surfacing their own concerns and bringing them to a broader public. Read about it on page 5.

For the first time we have had a series of Living Room Dialogues with a single theme and have linked them to our adult on-line forum. The

Coming Up

June 7, 2006 - A Living Room Dialogue, "How can war be prevented?," will be led by Maggie Ray, the Africa Program Assistant at the International Crisis Group, an organization which works to prevent and resolve deadly conflict through field research and advocacy.

6:30 PM at 73 Fifth Ave #4 (Rigoni)

Please bring a snack.

Fall 2006 – a Living Room Dialogue series. Watch for questions, dates and locations in the website.

October 26, 2006 – Recognition Night at the Marymount School, 1026 Fifth Ave. Invitations will be sent.

series was titled "Does warfare bring us security? If not, what will?" Included have been:

- An open dialogue with the St. Mary's Women's group of Lakeville, CT
- "Auroville: the City the World Needs" led by Zeno Levy, a student who spent a semester in India at this planned community.
- "Questioning Social Structures through the Lens of Katrina" in which Kathleen Kanet led the group through ways of thinking about this issue. See article on page 1 for details.
- "How Can War Be Prevented?" will be a discussion led by Maggie Ray of International Crisis group. For further information, see Coming Up above.

View reports of all of these activities on our web site (www.networkforpeace.com).

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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.

Katrina

(Continued from page 1)

However, the structural level demands a higher level of thinking. While our structures ultimately create the laws that oppress and kill people and do not allow them enough money to live adequately, we could some day turn those structures around. We could work for laws and policies that ensure a living wage for all and the right to a better life.

Transformation requires the building of structures, systems and relationships which promote a more human, more just and more peaceful world. All these were put in place by human beings, and thus, human beings can help change them.

Discussion

As the discussion opened up, some people said they don't think the situation will change, while others were more hopeful, saying that the situation can improve— if we keep pushing for it. We can't be angels solely within our own homes, said Kathleen. We have to go beyond them and serve as angels out in our streets and communities.

Some said the first step is to vote, noting that people everywhere, and even in New Orleans, have the potential to vote for officials who will do good things in their communities. But one participant asked why change doesn't happen even when new people are voted into office. One person observed that we have been neglecting the morals that

our country was founded on. Another urged a renewed focus on the common good.

Questions Raised

1. Why wasn't the reaction to Katrina equal to that of 9/11? Did it have to do with the fact that more underprivileged people live in the South?
2. Why, so many months later, are these people still not getting sufficient help? Is it a conscious act of racism and discrimination?
3. Why weren't the levees fixed before the hurricane hit? The danger of flooding had been predicted for years.
4. Where did all the money allocated for reconstruction go?

The discussion began to wind down as participants pondered the isolation of people from one another in our society, especially those groups accustomed to living comfortably. We're too satisfied with working hard to attain our own comfort and nothing more.

Often people look down on those whose lives are different. We must spend time with those in another reality (e.g., the victims of Katrina) so that we can understand that reality. The challenge is keeping our emotions consistent in order to have the energy to start a movement, in order to continue the struggle. Even one small change in our social structure has the power to some day blossom into something greater. We must never give up.

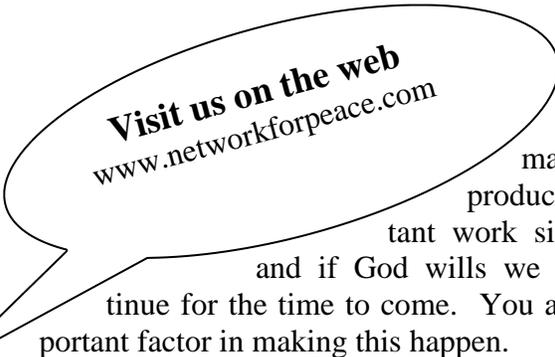
From the Director

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Fundraising

Just recently we used the web site for fundraising in two ways. We put a button on the home page which says *Donate Now* with a link to PayPal so that people can make on-line donations from their credit cards if they wish, and we had an auction of a painting donated by Jane Haher, MD.

We are very grateful to all of our contributors, those who share their money, their time, their thinking, their expertise and their prayers. The list is long and soon we will begin to include the names on our website. We are alive and active. At the present time our resources are slim, but we have



managed to produce important work since 1990 and if God wills we will continue for the time to come. You are an important factor in making this happen.

Visit our website for information about program and up-coming events. You can also participate in our on-line forums. To register, send an e-mail to N4PD@networkforpeace.com or visit the Forum on the website.

—Virginia Dorgan,
Executive Director

Editorial**Dialogue and Power**

Without knowledge, power, whether conceived of as brute force or as people acting together in concert, is blind and ultimately ineffective, aimless and without purpose or goal. Brute force depends primarily on a knowledge of physics to be effective. Dialogue, on the other hand, requires empathy, a sympathetic and free exchange of who we are as human beings, the kind of knowledge that is in itself anathema to the use of military force.

Whoever becomes rich in the knowledge needed for dialogue becomes a more powerful peacemaker while those who become rich in the knowledge of force become more powerful warriors. Technology, computers and the like, only magnifies the scope and efficacy of these two disparate types of knowledge but does not change their essential natures nor the kinds of power each one serves.

The power of dialogue is that of people working together in concert to achieve a common goal. Its aim is to understand others who are different, not as enemies to be defeated, but as partners in an effort to discover some good that both can strive to realize. Dialogue lays the groundwork for true security by humanizing others and cultivating mutual understanding.

Force, however, by its very nature dehumanizes — quite literally— by turning living human beings into dead things. Violence undermines the security of both the strong, who imagine that they are its master, and the weak. But no one masters force. Even the strong become mere things when they employ it, dehumanizing themselves by becoming *killing machines*, *slaves* to their own deluded faith in the efficacy of violence, and finally *corpses* as they are killed in turn. No one, neither the so-called victors nor their victims, ultimately escapes the pervasive desolation of war.

Without the mutual knowledge that comes as a result of dialogue, we can all be easily manipulated by the organized lying orchestrated by unscrupulous leaders, even to the point of participating in aggressive warfare and mass murder. Perpetrators of such crimes typically claim that their enemies embody the very epitome of evil. But this is a trick of smoke (confusion) and mirrors (psychological projection). These criminals only persuade others to join them by fanning their deepest fears, portraying whomever they wish to destroy as either super-human demons, sub-human beasts or (paradoxically) as both at once. The face of evil they paint onto their enemies is only a distorted but recognizable image of whatever it is they hate most about themselves. And so, mustering all the righteousness of self loathing, they strike out at phantoms that are merely the projected shadows of their own hidden hearts of darkness.

Recent Living Room Dialogues

At “How are the Kids?”: (l to r) Kathleen Kanet, Anne Considine, Frances Armando



At “Auroville: the City the Earth Needs”: Hallie Cohen and Francis Levy, parents of presenter Zeno Levy



At “Questioning Katrina through the Lens of Katrina”: Mary Heyser and Kristen Zurek

Harlem Youth Speak Out and Strategize Future Action

What worries young people in New York City? To find out, the planning committee of N4PD's "Confronting Concerns" project interviewed 52 youth from Harlem's All Saints parish and school and East Harlem's Incarcerated Mothers Program. When they tallied the results, they discovered that the top concern (32%) was street violence. Next came substance abuse (20%) and the war in Iraq (17%), followed by the environment, peer pressure and sex.

The young people have had a chance to investigate these concerns at three forums conducted throughout the last months. At the first, held in December, 2005, the participants engaged in individual as well as small group and large group activities that required critical thinking and analysis. In the second, held last April, the youth were encouraged to deepen their analysis through research and debate. Finally, in May, they explored avenues for action. For more on these events, see www.networkforpeace.com.

The planning committee for these events was designed from the beginning to be intergenerational. It included Kathleen Kanet, the director of the N4PD's Crossing Boundaries Program; Dorothy McWhite, a N4PD board member and member of All Saints parish, and two young people, Roshaunda Wickham and Janelle Bluford. The young people have played key roles in developing the events. They conducted initial interviews, helped design activities, designed a flyer, wrote letters, made announcements in church and school and learned community organizing through their outreach efforts. At the events themselves, they made sure registration and other important features of the day went smoothly.

Indispensable assistance for all three forums was contributed by Sarah Stevenson, a youth worker from Global Kids. Special thanks to her.

Understanding Leadership

By Roshaunda Wickham

As a high school senior, I have had my share of responsibilities from chores at home to running a club at school and holding part-time jobs. But my experience working on the planning committee of the youth program Confronting Concerns has allowed me to fully understand the concept of leadership. Being a part of the planning committee has

been a wonderful experience for me. It has permitted me to see what goes on within a planning committee. I no longer was an outsider looking in, but I became an insider.

Working on the planning committee allowed me to fully understand the concept of leadership and what it entails. A leader should be one who is willing and able to lead. A leader needs to be reliable, patient, creative and imaginative, understanding, dedicated, cooperative and able to listen to others. Although we all can be leaders, things such as pride, ego, fear, and power can prevent

people from leading decisively.

I was also able to provide leadership within the program through assigned tasks. I was able to practice public speaking by making announcements about the program. I played an intricate role in planning and coordinating activities for each forum.

After all the planning, I was able to enjoy afternoons with enjoyable activities, the outcome of all the hard work. It is so great listening to eleven-year-olds and seventeen-year-olds, our future leaders, share their opinions on these common issues and watching the adults present pay keen attention to the points being discussed. My experience as a committee organizer has truly been an empowering and memorable one.



Roshaunda Wickham and Janelle Bluford,
youth organizers



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**Participants pose at the Harlem youth forum “Confronting Concerns.”
See article about the forum inside.**