

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 #14B
New York, NY 10128

Phone (212) 426- 5818
Fax (212) 987-3575
email:
info@networkforpeace.com
website:
www.networkforpeace.com

One Hundred Youth Expected at May Dialogue Conference

By Ellie Shrier

In the Mott Hall High School library in Harlem, a group of young people are talking about why dialogue is important to them. “I can use it to get my thoughts and opinions across in a positive way,” reflects one young woman. Her classmate agrees, describing how dialogue is needed to address issues like sex, peer pressure, and violence. “When a problem comes your way, you can use dialogue to help you out—by talking instead of fighting.”

These students are taking part in a workshop through the 2010 Network for Peace youth dialogue program, “Youth Talking About Peace and Change”. As peer leaders through Mott Hall’s College for Every Student program, they use dialogue to address cultural diversity in their school and confront prejudice and discrimination. Like other young people throughout NYC, they feel strongly that youth need to express themselves and learn from one other about what they can do to create positive change.

A Space for Youth Voices

On Saturday, May 15th, the Mott Hall students will join up to 100 other young leaders at the Network for Peace Youth Dialogue Conference at Marymount Manhattan College. The conference addresses the critical need for spaces in which youth voices can be heard. It is a forum in which young activists, organizers, mediators, and educators will meet one another to share their work for change and build their skills in dialogue.

At the conference will be other young people who have taken part in this year’s youth dialogue program. The Network for Peace has partnered with youth and adults from organizations including the Osborne Association and Global Kids in Brooklyn, and Effective Alternative in Reconciliation Services (EARS) in the Bronx. Young people from these groups will lead workshops on issues that impact today’s youth, such as conflict and violence, racial profiling and police misconduct. They will be joined by Network for Peace Young Leaders Brittani Anderson and Jahmala Cornelius, who have been involved in facilitating this year’s program and will now be presenting their work on intergenerational dialogue at the conference.

A Day of Connection

The conference will be a day of connection, collaboration, performances, and peacemaking. Young people will continue the work of the Network for Peace’s Confronting Concerns program, which is ending this year after six years. Moreover, they will teach one another skills in dialogue that they can go on to use in their groups, as well as in their schools, families, and communities. As one Mott Hall student wrote in his evaluation of the workshop, “I want to keep an open mind and further educate others.”

From the Director

“Let’s Dialogue” is the invitation that Hayato Nakayama has been including on all of our notices for Living Room Dialogues since he began organizing them at the beginning of this year. He has done a great job, and we will miss him. A volunteer since the Fall, he will soon be moving on to pursue further education. See his appreciation of the value of dialogue and of the work we do on page 3.

At the end of November, regretfully, we were forced to let go our Program Director, Pamela Zivari, since we could no longer sustain her salary. For a year and a half, Pamela had brought life, warmth, creativity and thoughtful insight to all of our operations. We remain grateful for her legacy.

The Work Goes On

We continue to promote dialogue as a means to peace. Since the Fall ’09 newsletter, the Network has sponsored five Living Room Dialogues and begun a blog as an on-line forum for conversations across boundaries. The blog is connected to our continuously updated website which an experienced web developer recently heralded as “excellent.”

In addition, we are leading a unique youth conference for NYC high school activists so that they can incorporate dialogue in their work and recognize the connections between peace and dialogue (see photo below and article on page 1).

So let’s continue to dialogue!

Staff members Tene Howard and Ellie Shrier look on as young leader Brittani Anderson from the Confronting Concerns Leadership Institute presents dialogue activities at Mott Hall High School. Brittani and fellow leader Jahmala Cornelius also facilitated a workshop at the Osborne Association in Brooklyn, and will lead a workshop at the youth conference in May.



Coming Up

Friday, April 30 - Spring Fling at the home of Leslyn and Don Rigoni, celebrating the birthdays of Kathleen Kanet, Laura Fernandez, and Donna Cribari, and saying farewell and thank you to Hayato Nakayama

**Saturday, May 15 10:00 am – 4:00 pm
Marymount Manhattan College
221 71 Street.
Youth Conference for NYC High School students titled: “Youth Talking About Peace and Change**

Watch our website and your e-mail for upcoming Living Room Dialogues.

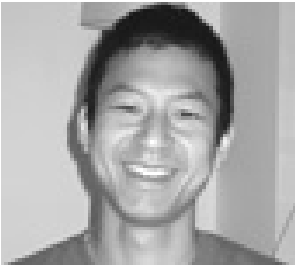
Always in operation, our blog at www.networkforpeace.com

Fall, 2010 – Start of an in-depth conversation to consider the value of dialogue as a means to peace as well as ways to promote dialogue.

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.

What “Dialogue” Means to Me

By Hayato Nakayama*



Hayato Nakayama

“This is what I was looking for!” This was what I thought when I first saw the name “Network for Peace through Dialogue.” Since I was a child I had always wanted to work for peace and had this vague idea of using dialogue as a means for peace. When I found out that there was an organization which was putting that idea into a practice, I was excited and happy to join them.

My time here at the Network had been fantastic. One of the major tasks for me was developing and overseeing the Living Room Dialogue. I enjoyed observing people having dialogue and getting better understandings in different issues. I believe that peace starts from small dialogues like this one. This is the foundation of peace. And I am so proud of being a part of it.

Is Dialogue Important for Peace?

While I was working here, I was constantly asking myself these questions, “What is dialogue?” and “Why is it important for peace?” Dialogue is listening to understand without trying to convince others and reaching agreements. This in itself is not a problem-solving tool, but it is a step needed before people negotiate and reach conclusions.

When people talk with their enemies, they have prejudice and assume that they know all about their enemies. The thing is that they don’t. Although they might know their political situation and power relations, they don’t know their enemies as other fellow humans.

Enemies Have Hearts

The best way to do that is through dialogue because it is a process of uncovering and revealing the true people. Through dialogue, they will notice that their enemies are like them, have hearts and care about their own people. This should be the starting point of resolving conflicts and achieving peace in all aspects. So I will continue to advocate for dialogue and for this organization in order to have a better and peaceful world.

**Hayato Nakayama is a staff member at the Network.*

Recent Living Room Dialogues

Full Reports of these dialogues can be found at www.networkforpeace.com

February - Will the Memory of War Ever Be Erased? Japan has a long history of conflict with China and Korea.

Hayato Nakayama, a graduate of a program in international relations and conflict resolution, told about this conflict and raised the following questions:

‘Do you think that the terrible memories like a war will ever be erased?’

‘How are our memories of war affecting the present and the future?’

‘More personally, can you forgive someone who did an awful thing to you in the past?’

March - Developing the Doctor-Patient Conversation: “Doctor may I have a word?”

Across America, the medical conversation between patient and physician is on life support. Doctors – playing the role of harried experts -- are hampered by bureaucratic red-tape. Patients struggle in supporting roles. Can we breathe some life into these conversations?

A dedicated physician, medical educator, and expert on the doctor/patient relationship, Dr. Susan Massad believes we can. She identifies the doctor / patient conversation as critical to the healing process and works with patients and doctors, alike, to become active shapers of that dialogue. What does that look like? How do we develop the healing relationship?

April - Women and War: Liberian Women “Pray the Devil Back to Hell”

In most historical settings, a role of women in the peacemaking process is largely untold. What if there is a story of women playing a huge part to put an end to a brutal war? In fact, there is! "Pray the Devil Back to Hell" tells a remarkable story of the courageous Liberian women who came together to bring peace to their shattered country. After viewing a scene from the film, we asked, "What do women bring to the peace table differently from men?"

Let's Dialogue? Who Can We Talk With?

On the subject of dialogue and peace, we often hear it said that dialogue can't bring peace because people who make war or who believe they and only they are in the right just aren't open to it. For example, some believe the West is engaged in a "culture war" with Islam and that most Muslims are beyond the reach of dialogue. Here we have another view. Bret Nelson is a staff member with Network for Peace. He holds an MA in political science from Fordham University where he concentrated on issues concerning the Middle East and North Africa including Islamic political thought and terrorism.

Let's Not Make Assumptions About Who Won't Talk. Meet Tariq Ramadan.

By Bret Nelson

Last week marked the return of Tariq Ramadan, a prominent and controversial Islamic scholar to the United States. This is the first appearance Ramadan has made in America after having been banned from entry to the United States in 2004. This ban prevented Ramadan from accepting a position as the Henry R. Luce Professor of Religion, Conflict and Peacebuilding at the Joan B. Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, at the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Indiana.

Of the more interesting and substantial controversies surrounding Ramadan is that of his family lineage. His grandfather, Hassan al-Banna was the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, a political Islamic group originating in Egypt in 1928. This group has committed terrorist attacks in the Middle East in the name of Islam and elements of its ideology have been highly influential on Osama bin Laden and Al-Qa'ida in general. Additionally, Ramadan is criticized in the West for not outright condemning practices perpetrated in the name of Islam such as the stoning of women and suicide bombings.

Islam and Western Secular Society

Controversies aside, what makes Tariq Ramadan such an interesting figure, and why he is important in a dialogic sense, is that he tries to bridge the perceived gap between Islam and the West. He has published many works on Islamic theology and its compatibility with Western secular society. While Ramadan firmly asserts that Islam presents a superior ethical system compared to Western secularism, he is a leading proponent of dialogue between Islam and the West and trying to reach mutual understanding and acceptance.

Equally important, Ramadan also advocates for dialogue *within Islam itself* in order to address those practices supposedly justified by Islam that violate basic human rights such as the concept of *Hudud* (pronounced "hoo-dood") or retributive justice based on the "eye for an eye" principle found in the Old Testament. Among the punishments falling under the *Hudud* concept are stoning of women for committing adultery, the lopping off of hands or feet for theft, and the death penalty for committing murder. Ramadan has called for a moratorium on the practice of honor killings and other such practices while the Islamic principles that supposedly justify such acts are reevaluated within a modern context. This step, although positive, has not been without controversy here in the West.

CNN Interview

Last week Christiane Amanpour on CNN interviewed Ramadan where she challenged him for not having outright condemned *Hudud* practices. Ramadan defended himself by stating that he, personally, is against these practices, but because Islam is not monolithic – there are many schools of thought within Islam – condemning *Hudud* is not going to do the least bit good, especially if it's done by a European Muslim in Paris. Ramadan is calling for all these practices be stopped while Muslim scholars go back to their religious texts, reevaluate, and participate in a dialogue questioning if these practices are really sanctioned by the sayings and actions of the Prophet Mohammad and Islamic law in general.

(Continued on p. 5)

Tariq Ramadan
(Continued from p. 4)

I think that we, as Westerners, have a tendency to think of Islam as a monolithic faith in which all Muslims believe the same things. When practices within Islam are viewed from a Western standpoint, things ranging from women wearing veils to the stoning of women accused of adultery, are sometimes viewed as the total expression of Islam. In reality, Islam and the Islamic world are far more complicated, just as there are different expressions of Christianity and Judaism.



Bret Nelson



Students from a media class at Marymount Manhattan College chose Network for Peace through Dialogue in a project to make promotional videos for community service organizations. They will produce one six-minute video about the youth program and another about the organization in general.

A Mott Hall High School student enjoying a break during a workshop on dialogue presented by young leaders from our Leadership Institute. See article on p. 1.



LET'S DIALOGUE

**Help us to continue to promote dialogue as a means to peace.
If you can, please send a contribution to:**

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**Who Dialogues?
(and when and where and how?)**

A book for classrooms, faculty committees, and community organizations where there is an interest in studying or engaging in dialogue.

"I think the book begins to answer at least two important needs: to see how dialogic thinking and practices actually play out in multi-disciplinary and multi-cultural contexts, and to get an inside view on the process of practitioners' reflection on their own experiences. It's written in an easily-accessible style (no academic turgidity here) and offers questions to ponder and exercises that can be used 'in the field' right away."

—Robert R. Stains, Jr., Vice President, Public Conversations Project

Cost: \$5 plus shipping and handling.

**For information or to order, contact Network for Peace through Dialogue, 240 E. 93d St., #3H,
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