Gender Inequality, Xenophobia, Economic Inequality, and Poverty

BY YVETTE VASQUEZ AND THOMAS WILKES, WORLDLINK INTERNS

In today’s world, there are conflicts with deep rooted causes, some of which have existed for hundreds of years. Wars, racial and ethnic conflicts, oppression, and more plague people all over the world. While many continue to search for solutions, youth are already playing a key role in understanding these causes and contributing new ideas.

On Friday, January 23, 2009, over 600 young people gathered at the University of San Diego to begin such a conversation. Twenty-five schools were in attendance from the Greater San Diego area, including Rancho Buena Vista, Sunset High School, High Tech High International, and there were also schools from Baja Mexico, such as CETYS Universidad Campus Tijuana. Students arrived at Shirley Courtyard on the campus of the University of San Diego before 7:30am to participate in the 12th Annual Youth Town Meeting. The theme of the conference was: “On the Brink: Responding to Underlying Causes of Conflict.”

The event focused on informing the youth about the five sub-topics: gender inequality, racism, xenophobia, religious intolerance, and economic inequality.

After the students ate breakfast in the Shirley Courtyard, they moved to Shirley Theater, where the introduction to some of the causes of the world’s conflicts was given through the speeches of panelists and Worldlink interns. The panel comprised of experts from various backgrounds and professions. These speakers each contributed to the Youth Town Meeting’s goal of increasing the youth’s awareness and understanding of the atrocities that people around the world face everyday.

The panel included Dipak Gupta (professor, San Diego State University, Department of Political Science), Robert Buelow (coordinator, UC Irvine, Campus Assault Resources and Education Department), Judy Bernstein (co-author of They Poured Fire on us From the Sky), and Imam Taha Hassane (Islamic Center of San Diego).

As WorldLink interns and juniors at High Tech High International Jay Bartell and Sierra Parker came to the podium, the audience gave a booming round of applause. First to speak was Parker, who started by describing the troublesome world that the youth will soon inherit, “one filled with debt, poverty, lack of resources, climate change, and many other depressing topics.” She encouraged the audience to focus on the power of the youth’s will, using the recent presidential election as an example of their collective capacity to make a difference. She went on to briefly explain the subtopics of the conference and included many current situations, such as the conflict in the Gaza Strip and xenophobia in South Africa.

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Youth Turn Tables

What exactly is conflict and what results from it? Laura Taylor, Ph.D. student at the University of Notre Dame and an enthusiastic presenter of the interactive briefing “Turning the Tables: Youth Transforming Conflict,” asked students these questions. In doing so, Taylor was able to establish the universal idea that conflict raises not only negative outcomes, but positive ones as well. She attributed this to the idea that conflict extends the collective capacity to make a difference.

As a precursor to her hands-on activity, Taylor introduced the Cycle of Violent Conflict, which she later exemplified through a very explicit case study of Nepal. Within this cycle, violent conflicts are initially stimulated because of one or more root causes, manifesting in economic inequality, to name a few. With these root causes, manifestation takes place among a people, thus leading toward an escalation on the overall conflict. With an escalation comes de-escalation, eventually leading toward a grand settlement on the issue - a peace treaty or an enforced law.

If the conflict proves itself to be constructive, sustainable peace is also achieved. That is to say, if that “grand settlement” is inclusive and participatory among all peoples involved.

Unfortunately, this Cycle of Violent Conflict is also subject to internal and external forces altering the overall conflict; be it positive or negative, deconstructive or constructive. With Nepal’s past conflict, Taylor attributed the traditional Hindu caste structure as the initial root cause within Nepal.

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Perspectives of Former Refugees

BY SANDRA ANTON
STAFF WRITER

At the 12th Annual WorldLink Youth Town Meeting, students were faced with serious topics: religious intolerance, gender inequality, xenophobia, and terrorism. Responding to this year’s theme, “On the Brink: Responding to Underlying Causes of Conflict,” one of the conference’s speakers was Dr. Dipak Gupta, who elaborated on how economic roots to political violence. Gupta, born in India, is a professor of World Peace and Political Science at San Diego State University. He has a master’s degree in economics, and a Ph.D. in social development. Gupta opened his sessions by receiving some feedback from the youth in the audience. He posed the question: “What do you think camp’s political violence and terrorism?” The answers that followed were poverty, hopelessness, and powerlessness, Gupta clarified on the typical terrorist structure. He explained that most people incorrectly assume that the reason political violence occurs is because terrorist groups want to cause communism in order to call attention to their suffering. The problem with this assumption is that many leaders of terrorist organizations are actually very well educated and hail from privileged upper and middle classes. Gupta explained that terrorist supporters and followers are sometimes, but not always, those living in the lower and impoverished classes. He argued that the leaders of these terrorist groups have to be smarter than their followers in order to control their followers’ actions and minds. According to Gupta, leading often turn to “framing” to gain support. For example, Al Qaeda will take passages from the Qur’an, Islam’s holy book, to persuade followers to believe that the message is coming from God. The leaders of terrorist groups “frame” these passages, or take them out of context, and use them to control people who have been deprived of an education. By preying on the weaknesses of others, terrorist leaders can gain support for their goals. Al Qaeda leaders would never show the full content of the Qur’an passages ensuring that prospective followers see only what they wish them to see.

Common Misperceptions of Political Violence

BY ALYSSA HALL
STAFF WRITER

It is estimated that twenty-five percent of San Diego’s population is foreign-born, many of whom are refugees forced from their homes because of racism, religious and ethnic persecution, war, and violence. Refugees from all over the world settled throughout San Diego in hopes of gradually rebuilding their lives. The AJA Project and Catholic Charities Diocese of San Diego (CCDSD) are two local organizations that help refugees cope with feelings of despair, loss, and alienation, which are common when people move from their homeland to a foreign country.

This year’s Youth Town Meeting introduced four refugees and the experiences they had leaving their homes prior to arriving in San Diego. They were a very diverse group: Rawan Blejani and Aiven Al-Ankawi from Iraq, Mya Kyi from Burma, and Famo Musa from Somalia. CCDSD assists Blejani and Kyi, while AJA helps Al-Ankawi and Musa create better opportunities for their futures. Blejani, 19, was born in Iraq. It was not until she was ten that she left her home to seek refuge in Austria. She describes Burmese army, she was forced to flee. She describes them as cruel, en-slaving and attacking the village people. They were often forced to hide in the jungle for safety until the army left. The army would burn their villages, making it difficult for villagers to go back to their homes. “They wanted to kill every last one of us,” Kyi states with tears in her eyes. Kyi was four-years-old when she arrived at the refugee camp. The camp was very strict; they had to get permission to leave, lights had to promptly go off at nine, and it was very difficult for her to receive an education. “You couldn’t go outside and understand what was going on in the world,” she states.

Kyi came to the United States in hopes of getting an education. “There are more opportunities to go to school,” she argues. “In Burma, I had to become a doctor so that she can go home one day and help the people of her country.” Musa, 17, was born in Somalia. When she was only five-years-old, she and her family moved to the Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya. After six years here, they made the decision to move to the United States because of the many diseases they were exposed to at the camp. When she left Kenya, she was torn between the excitement for her soon-to-be new life in the United States and the sadness of having to leave everything that she knew behind. “We were going to a better place where we wouldn’t have to worry about food,” she remembers thinking. The U.S. was very different to her; country due to threats from tall buildings. At first, she was afraid of being kidnapped, but then realized that everyone was very helpful. In the future, she hopes to become a photojournalist and write stories about people in Africa.

Each of the refugees were very young when they left their country. Their journeys were very tough and tested their emotions as well as their resolve. Each speaker was genuine and the despair was palpable as they spoke. Blejani put it best when explaining their tough times; “You have to go through hardships to get to where you are today.”

Economic inequity, then, sometimes results in terrorists being able to manipulate and influence more impoverished populations. Once there is a large crowd of people who begin to view the world from a particular terrorist group’s perspective, it is easy to incite political violence. “It is the people who take ideas and make [others] see the world in their own way,” Gupta explains, that causes political violence. He notes that even middle and upper class people are susceptible to falling for these ideas if there is massive unrest. Extensive poverty, lack of hope, and humiliation all contribute to public anger, but it “ultimately depends on a group of people who want to use this frustration, anger, or simply the need to belong and manipulate you and tell you that this is the only way.”

Toward the end of the session, students were concerned about what they could do to combat terrorist organizations. When asked, Gupta explained that the best thing to do was to “get to know” the people who we believe to be terrorists. In order to combat terrorism, students are encouraged to understand the reasons behind their actions. “We need to see that there is no single set of principles for a world full of diverse cultures and religions.”
**The Dangers of Xenophobia**

**BY MATTHEW WONG**

Judy A. Bernstein, author of *They Poured Fire On Us From the Sky*, began her briefing session with a clip from “60 Minutes” detailing the trials and tribulations of Sudanese children. Dubbed “the Lost Boys of Sudan,” the children had to walk thousands of miles to escape the violence and turmoil that has plagued their country.

She then asked the audience a prescient question: what caused the “Lost Boys” to go through such a harrowing journey?

“Xenophobia,” Bernstein said, “causes many conflicts in the world, but in some cases xenophobia is not the cause but the weapon.”

Such is the case in Sudan, where Bernstein said a corrupt government has weighed down its people by using xenophobia, the fear of foreigners or strangers, as a fear tactic.

Relying on a worn-out National Geographic photo of Africa to help the audience visualize the area, Bernstein described the sectional violence between Arab Muslims in the north and the Christians in the south. Furthermore, in Darfur, the western region of Sudan, “has faced many years of tensions over land, nomadic Arabs, and farmers from the Fur, Masaleet, and Zaghaiva communities struggling to obtain rights,” explains the BBC News. “The United Nations has accused Sudan’s government of arming Arab militiamen known as the Janjaweed, gunned on horseback, for the purpose of dismantling rebel insurgents and villages. The Bush administration openly declared the situation of Darfur as genocide, while the United Nations has been searching for further proof of genocide in concurrence with its Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide as it has not yet found any intent of committing genocide, only war crimes,” cites an in-depth report by the BBC.

Bernstein took questions from the audience and explained that wealth has a lot to do with the inherent problems in Sudan. Because the Sudanese government in Khartoum has used ruthless tactics to acquire wealth, moral boundaries have been crossed in the rampant pillaging of villages, rape and death.

“Sudan has existed with many ethnic groups living side by side for hundreds, maybe thousands of years and a natural balance of power developed,” Bernstein said. “Until outside super powers used existing xenophobia for their own motives, there was no genocide.”

When asked what the international community should do to respond to the situation in Sudan, Bernstein replied with a bit of caution. She noted that while governments should be left to act independently, certain cases “requires other governments to step in and help the victims regain balance.”

As corrupt as the situation is in Sudan, Bernstein said that there are still ways that the international community can help. While obtaining reliable information and learning about the root problems in Sudan are important, Bernstein said that Americans “can urge their US representative to support the UN aid” or give “aid to the Internally Displaced People and refugees.”

Bernstein urged WorldLink delegates to stay away from ignorance when hearing about the many problems in the world today.

“If you are interested in conflict resolution or prevention at any level, look below the surface - at the root cause of the conflict,” she said. “Don’t let your own xenophobia allow you to jump to conclusions about a group of people.”

**Sustainability is Good Business**

**BY YVETTE VASQUEZ**

In his briefing, “Sustainability is Good Business,” Ben Thompson, Vice President of International Development for Invisible Children, explained that in Uganda, most children do not have access to an education. Over 15 million of these unschooled children are constantly looking for some sort of work so that they can earn money to buy a meal. The streets that they live in are dangerous.

Thompson began his briefing with an enlightening video from the nonprofit Invisible Children on the ongoing conflict situation in Uganda. Thompson primarily focused his briefing on the economic aspect of ending the conflict and developing the country’s economic independence. He continued by explaining how conflict interrupts the economy and how that in turn affects local communities and the livelihood of its residents. He also explained how “interconnected” the world currently is and the role that people in other countries play through the decisions they make by saying, “what I choose to buy has impacts across the world.” An example of a current effort made by Invisible Children is the organization’s Bracelet Campaign. The campaign employs Ugandans to make traditional bracelets that are then sold throughout the world to bring income to the area. This micro-economic idea offers hundreds of local Ugandans a steady source of work while creating sustainable business for community. Efforts such as these are supporting a steady development which will then foster a culture of pride and unity in their accomplishments.

He inspired the audience to be cognizant of conflicts throughout the world and to support sustainable business by bringing awareness to how they affect the world as a global consumer.

On the Brink
### National Identity in South Africa

**BY KATHLENE MANIMTIM**

**STAFF WRITER**

"Does anyone know anything about South Africa?" asked Dr. Michael Williams, professor of the Department of Political Science and International Relations at the University of San Diego. Williams asked this question to open his Socratic discussion about the challenge of national identity in post-apartheid South Africa. His dedicated interest in South African politics began after visiting the country in 1991, 1994, and every year since 1998.

As citizens struggle with xenophobia, Williams asks, "Why fear differences?" He explains that overcoming differences is inherently difficult for humans.

"Apartheid" is the Afrikaans term for aparness, "separateness," and is at one level similar to the segregation that occurred in the United States. However, it is different because apartheid involved more than just categorizing by color. Beginning in the 1600s, about ten percent of the South African population ruled over the other 90%, and "blacks" were divided into ethnic groups for easier control. The result was tension among the many ethnicities in South Africa, including the Zulu, Swazi, Swana, and many others.

Data shows students a ballot from South Africa’s first presidential election in 1994, in its transition to a democracy. At the time, 50% of the voting population was illiterate so pictures accompanied each candidate’s name. South Africa’s first president, Nelson Mandela, held hopes of becoming one nation but it has not been easy with growing tension among black African immigrants who came into the country leading to the spontaneous outbursts of violence in May 2008 that resulted in over 65 people killed and 100,000 displaced.

"Why would black South Africans attack other black Africans that they’re living with?" Williams asked. He says that immediately, many theorized the cause was economic, with a vast majority of blacks being poor. Two million blacks live in shacks with over one-half of the black population living under the poverty level of $22 dollars a month, the unemployment rate at 40 percent, and the need for its economy to grow at a rate of six percent a year in order to maintain its current poverty level.

### Working in Conflict Zones

**BY AMARUTA TRIVEDI**

**STAFF WRITER**

When asked what the single-most important skill to prevent conflicts is, Amy Hyatt responded without hesitation: "communication." As a Foreign Service officer working for the United States Department of State, Hyatt has represented the United States for over 23 years in over six embassies worldwide, using communication as her tool to alleviate tensions.

"I believe in using the tools of diplomacy and communication to figure out why and what the opposing perspective is." She believes that it is very important for diplomats to be able to listen to other perspectives and understand why others hold those beliefs. Hyatt believes that the best way to do that is to live within that culture.

To prepare themselves for assignments, diplomats like Hyatt receive training in protection.SENT without limbs, diplomats usually work overseas in secreted and fortified embassies. Under such tight security, diplomats find it challenging to communicate with the local community and gain an understanding of the culture they are in. Thus, they use various "tricks of the trade" to safely immerse themselves in the culture. Foreign Service officers often vary their routes and travel times, evade tourist attractions frequented by foreigners, and trust their instincts when something appears wrong or out of place so that they can stay out of harm’s way and avoid being predictable. These tricks are especially important to follow in areas that might present a threat to personal security.

Hyatt has experienced some very dangerous situations. Back when she was stationed in the Philippines during a major government transition, protests would often break out. She recalled the United States embassy in Manila stationing troops outside to protect the diplomats. Even her children’s school bus carried military personnel with machine guns to protect the children. While observing a student protest, Hyatt collapsed from tear gas used by the Filipino police. Although she was taken to safety by a colleague, she admitted to the dangers involved in being a diplomat. Hyatt has also had to sacrifice intimate, family affairs as a result of her career.

To Hyatt, the most rewarding part of her career as a Foreign Service officer is the satisfaction she receives upon "doing something that matters." She references the time she spent as a diplomat in North Korea, working on an agreement involving nuclear power, and as a political analyst handling the relationship between the United States and North Korea for the Bureau of Intelligence and Research in Washington D.C. Hyatt understands the need for people in this line of work to today’s increasingly globalized society. By traveling around the world, she experiences the attitude foreigners have toward the United States. She noted how the once respectful, optimistic attitude towards the U.S. has deteriorated into one of shame and contempt. Therefore, Hyatt believes it is important to represent the principles of the United States well. She hopes that the new administration’s policy will change some perceptions of this country.

On a similar note, she stressed that the student delegates should “use a little bit of diplomacy” in their own lives. Hyatt wants students to prevent conflict in their respective communities because, according to Hyatt, “the same issues that cause conflict overseas also cause conflict locally.”
Rabbi Lisa Goldstein, Catholic Youth Minister Benjamin Lee, and Kadampa Buddhist Monk Gen Kelsang Atisha obviously come from different backgrounds and lifestyles. However, they did not come to speak of the vast differences between their religions in their briefing: “Learning to Coexist: Finding Unity in Religious Differences.” They instead shared the similarities that unite their beliefs and the importance of tolerance. Although religion is often a controversial issue in society, the speakers maintained a respectful tone which allowed the topic to be discussed with ease.

Rabbi Goldstein began by sharing a basic understanding of the Jewish faith and its origins. She presented three traditional stories that have strongly influenced Judaism. She began by explaining the creation of the world as told in the book of Genesis, the first book of the Torah. Goldstein went on to discuss how a story in the book of Exodus was of high importance to the Jewish community because it demonstrates the message of, “love the stranger because you were strangers in Egypt.” The third story of Mount Sinai emphasizes the importance of living a holy life.

Catholic Youth Minister Lee shared the basics of the Catholic religion, elaborating that it extended from Jewish tradition, yet believed that Jesus Christ was sent down to earth as God in human form. He explained the concept of salvation, and informed students that Catholics did not necessarily believe that there was no salvation in other religions.

After clarification of the basics of Judaism and Catholicism, Kadampa Buddhist Monk Kelsang Atisha began to speak about the problems that arise when religion is used to justify hate, crime, and violence. Lee agreed with Atisha, adding that there was no sense in a “war justified in the name of God,” because it contradicted the basis of their belief: love, peace, and unity. Atisha continued, stating that the problem was not in religious differences. The problem comes from one group blaming another group for their suffering and, in return, enacting revenge towards them. He urged the students to be careful when responding to others, and to refrain from any negative actions.

The three religious leaders came to an important conclusion that showed the power of tolerance for each religion and find peace. The students that attended the briefing session left with a valuable and unforgettable message: rather than using faith as a weapon, faith should be used to unite and tolerate differences.

**Finding Unity in Religious Differences**

**BY AMARUTA TRIVEDI**
**STAFF WRITER**

Robert Buelow, violence prevention coordinator for the Campus Assault Resources and Education Department at the University of California, Irvine, and Bachelor’s in Psychology with a minor in Women’s Studies, presented in his briefing, “Act Like A Man: Think Outside the Box,” the reality of gender roles in society. He engaged the students in two interactive activities to inform the delegates about this issue.

The first session activity was called “The Power of 10.” Five volunteers were instructed to answer a statistical question. If their answer fell in a 10% range of the correct answer, they were given a prize. The first question asked the percentage of American women who had been physically abused by their husbands or boyfriends: 31%. The second asked how many college students in the United States would experience rape or attempted rape: 25%. The third percentage: 91% answered the question of how many of victims of rape were women, which countered the idea that only women are victims of rape. The fourth student was asked what the percentage of rapes were committed by people known to the victim (e.g. family or friends): 77%. The last and final question resulted in a shocking percentage, 99% of people who commit rape are men, however, this is not to say that 99% of men are rapists. To elaborate more on that statement the explanation given was: in the total number of rapes committed, 99% of them are male, but in an entire population, 99% of males are not rapists.

The second activity dealt with the stereotypes given to males. The students were given a picture of a drawn male figure inside a box. After the students named their figures they were asked to, in diads, come up with words that describe males and to write them inside the box. After the two minute discussion, students were to share out loud the best adjectives they produced, some were: manly, tough, emotionless, strong, fearless, risk-taker, built, good-looking, proud, intelligent, independent, macho and brave.

The second part of the activity was to think of words that are not used to describe males. Once again the students were asked to brainstorm in partners. The words that the students came up with were: weak, ugly, poor, scared, fat, dumb, small, gay, pretty, needy, adorable, helpless, and petite. Students noted that many of these words would usually be used when describing a woman. For this reason, the female gender is seen as the weaker one. Society has also created the notion that females should be submissive to males. This is exactly why the image of damsels in distress are common. It is important for this generation to crack down and revolutionize the stereotypes that have become mundane to society. At the core, both women and men share very similar emotional characteristics, and there should not be a reason why either sex isn’t able to pursue their own endeavors.

In conclusion, Buelow stated, “we need to step out of the box” and break down stereotypes. In order to be successful in doing this, students were urged to: stop bullying, be open-minded, accepting, and understanding of others, while maintaining positive attitudes, be critical of the messages sent by the media, and start empowering women. By increasing education and raising awareness the way to a gender-balanced society is reachable.
Thomas Awiapo, a program coordinator for Catholic Relief Services (CRS), brought his personal story of hunger and hope to the delegates at the 12th Annual WorldLink Youth Town Meeting. A native of the West African country of Gambia, the delegates grew up in a small, poor village without clean running water or electricity. He described how he lost both of his parents at a young age and "grew up as a child not knowing what it means to have a parent." Hunger was a constant problem as he and his brothers "battled one another for food." Despite these great adversities, Awiapo was able to find a sense of hope from a school set up by the local CRS group. In his village, the CRS school provided a snack and a lunch for every student, serving as a lifeline for the impoverished youth. At first, Awiapo struggled with school, as he was only interested in obtaining food and nothing else. Eventually, he worked his way up to third in the class after realizing the benefits of obtaining a good education. Awiapo felt very grateful for the aid he received from CRS, stating that it "brought me hope, love, justice, and compassion." Through the help he obtained from the agency, Awiapo was able to break away from the vicious cycle of poverty and find his true calling in life. Once faced with an almost hopeless situation, Awiapo has found a sense of fulfillment in life. Now he spends his time spreading his message of hunger and hope all around the world, including over forty states in the United States. He joked that, "the best place I’ve visited is Las Vegas." Awiapo also works for CRS, helping to advance their education program in Ghana. "Education is simply the answer," Awiapo stated. “Education is liberation.” He is happily married and is the father of four children, including a little girl named Lindie who was born just a week before the WorldLink conference.

Awiapo’s message to the WorldLink delegates focused on the harmful, global effects of greed. He started off by sharing the native African tale of the “Three Greedy Hunters,” who together find a box of gold but end up killing each other instead of sharing what they had found. He commented that, “we find ourselves in a world consumed by greed...unless we can deal with greed, greed will deal with us.” He is dedicated to helping to advance their aid not to be consumed by materialism and consumerism but instead said that, “life is about sharing our gifts, our talents, our humanity.” Only then, Awiapo stated, will we “be free of any conflict in this world.” Throughout the presentation, Awiapo repeated one of his favorite quotes from Mother Teresa of Calcutta: "God has provided enough for our needs but not for our greed.”

In the present day, the country of Ghana is progressing. Awiapo assured delegates that “many wells are being dug in the desert” and that people are willing to support education for their children. Despite the previous problems of poverty and corruption leadership in the nation, a peaceful transition of power recently took place earlier this month. Awiapo’s message of hunger and hope proved to be a great inspiration for WorldLink delegates. His enthusiasm for serving his neighbors in need with love, just as in his presentation. “I celebrate love," Awiapo said, “I’m happy I’m alive.”

For centuries, religion has been a major underlying cause of conflict between people and nations. Religious differences have caused wars, crusades, and suicide bombings. Lance Nelson, professor of Twentieth Century Religious Studies at the University of San Diego, explained some of the complexities behind religion during his session entitled “Religion: Part of the Problem or Part of the Solution?” According to Dr. Nelson, there is an air of culprit of such situations when it displays specific characteristics. These include absolutism, exclusivism, dualism, religious tribalism and idolatry, scapegoating and “othering,” and symbolic association or selective “proof texting.” When a religion exhibits such behaviors, it becomes exclusive and transforms into a group worshiping not a god but the religion itself. The religion also becomes dualistic and wagers a battle against an “evil” group of “others” who oppose its beliefs. This is hazardous because, with the threat of a malicious enemy, the religious group can legitimate all means of attack through their religion’s symbols and scriptures.

To demonstrate the effects of “bad religion," Nelson focused on a conflict in Jerusalem between Muslims and Jews. The Dome of the Rock is considered by Muslims to be the third holiest site on earth. Nelson explained that the shrine houses a sacred stone which Muslims believe to be the place where Prophet Muhammad ascended into Heaven. Jews also find this site to be of equal importance since they believe this is where Abraham was asked by God to kill his own son Isaac. The Jewish Temple of Herod stood in this place prior to the construction of the Dome of the Rock.

After the destruction of the temple by the Romans in the year 70 A.D, all that remained was the Western wall, also known as “the Wailing Wall.” Since this crucial piece of land now belongs to Muslims, non-Muslims are only able to visit the Wailing Wall, unable to enter the rest of the property. Nelson related this situation to the different levels of religious ideology by calling this an example of dualism. He explained that when there is dualism, meaning everything is either “black or white,” there is no room for compromise. In this case, the site of the Dome of the Rock and the Wailing Wall cannot be negotiated because both sides believe that their faith is the absolute truth. Due to this, there is continuous controversy over who it belongs to. Nelson ended by saying that duality makes negotiation and compromise impossible. He believes that when religions turn to dualism, they can create conflicts. The view of being “good” and fighting against “evil” causes the people of the religion to believe that they can punish or destroy anyone else.

Mary Ellen Jebbia, a junior at the University of Southern California (USC), spoke next of her experiences with the Interfaith Council. The Interfaith Council is a group dedicated to promoting religious tolerance through understanding and action. Professor Nelson identified and elaborated on the underlying conflict, Jebbia gave a glimpse into the duality within religion. Through discussions about education’s influence on faith or the differences between monotheistic (worshiping one god) and polytheistic (worshiping many different gods) religions, members begin to understand and embrace the different beliefs of unknown religions.

When asked how to discuss religion with a friend or classmate without conflict, Jebbia suggested that before discussing such a personal topic as faith, one must build a relationship and open friendship with a person to find understanding. Professor Nelson suggested practicing “good religion” compassion, serenity, and understanding than doctrine and by asking “what is your religion going to do to help?” In Nelson’s experience, this change in mindset renders more informed and hopeful that, with this knowledge, they could confront the underlying causes of religious conflict between themselves and others to promote peace and understanding.
Deadlier than an AK-47: Rape

BY VANESSA ZARATE
STAFF WRITER

When pondering over some of the biggest conflicts in the world, many people are convinced that the only way that some of these conflicts can be stopped is by dropping the bombs and emptying the mines into areas most affected by violence. But it is not just the bombs and mines that are causing the problems. It can be as simple as a picture containing a statement, where by students were asked to turn to; no government to seek justice. Females are often afraid to speak out in fear of threatening the lives of their families. Also, sexually violent acts are considered to be acceptable in Congolese culture, and women are too ashamed to seek help.

Jennifer Freeman is an advocate of women’s rights and peacebuilding. She has worked with various nongovernmental organizations in Ghana, Canada, and the United Kingdom. Freeman received her M.A. in Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Ulster in Northern Ireland, and her B.A. in Political Science, German and European Studies from the University of Victoria in Canada.

Freeman comments that the incident in Rwanda was a “major catalyst” in the war today.

Freeman euphemized nothing in her presentation of Congo’s destruction. The death count in Congo stands at 5.4 million, making it second only to World War II. Rebels avoid capture by hiding in mining hills, and thousands are forced into labor camps and cannot return home. Villagers must walk long distances to retrieve the resources needed to survive (e.g., water, food, and fire wood.) While men risk death, women risk something worse.

“To say that rape is widespread is an understatement,” Freeman says. Soldiers rape indiscriminately; adult women, teens, children, and even infants. What is perhaps the most tragic about these crimes is that women have no one to turn to; no government to seek justice. Females are often afraid to report rape because of violence they will suffer.

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“To say that rape is widespread is an understatement,” Freeman says. Soldiers rape indiscriminately; adult women, teens, children, and even infants. What is perhaps the most tragic about these crimes is that women have no one to turn to; no government to seek justice. Females are often afraid to report rape because of violence they will suffer.

While the speakers at this year’s Youth Town Meeting focused on presenting the underlying causes of conflict in the world, Dr. Robert K. Hitchcock shed light on the effects and consequences that such conflicts can have on the inhabitants of tumultuous nations. Hitchcock, cultural anthropologist, and chair of the Department of Anthropology at Michigan State University, centered his session on the plight of indigenous peoples, discrimination, and the struggle for social justice. He began by enlightening his audience with a shocking statistic: there were over 22 million refugees worldwide in 2008. These refugees, people who have fled their homelands seeking asylum, face the difficult process of assimilation and are often targets of discrimination.

Not all refugees are uprooted for the same reason. According to Hitchcock, developments of countries and environmental causes as well as ethnic cleansing all contribute to this growing problem. For example, development refugees are forced from their homes and governments may seize their land in order to provide the means and space required for expansion. This forced removal, which has occurred in countries such as Botswana, typically results in the loss of ties to the land as well as cultural traditions. In addition to those who are completely expelled from their native lands, approximately 10 million people are displaced each year. Indigenous groups most often live in high diversity areas and can fall victim to unfortunate environmental situations such as droughts and deforestation that destroy their homes and cause these environmental inhabitants to find themselves internally displaced. This is especially prevalent in Southern Africa, Latin America, and Asia. Hitchcock went on to explain that because displaced peoples are not classified as refugees, it is extremely difficult for them to receive the aid that they so desperately need.

Even in the absence of development needs or environmental causes, ethnic cleansing poses a threat to indigenous populations around the world. This term, which surged in the late 1990s, refers to the deliberate removal of a population from a territory. Countries such as Guatemala and the United States have experienced this through civil war and the situation of the Native Americans in the Great Plains, respectively. Whether for political, military, or other motives, ethnic cleansing has been committed in nearly all nations. Hitchcock pointed out that, “every single country has used ethnic cleansing as a strategy for its own purposes and the primary purpose of doing this is control.” Until this “control” is relinquished, indigenous peoples will continue to be adversely affected.

Fortunately, Hitchcock made mention of numerous ways in which aid can be provided for both refugees and displaced peoples. Humanitarian assistance is the main approach and includes supplying those in need with food, water, blankets, and other goods and resources. In addition to providing disaster relief services, Hitchcock leads by example through his involvement as co-President and member of the Board of Directors of the Kalahari People’s Fund, a non-profit organization dedicated to responding to the needs of indigenous Kalahari communities in Botswana. Hopefully our new administration will support legislation such as “the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.” Additionally, Hitchcock recommends that young people find local organizations to which they can donate their time and services and educate themselves on important issues. In order to become more informed and connected to the global village, they should study law, anthropology, or conflict resolution as well as learning another language. Effective communication is essential for solving this problem. By thinking globally and acting locally, we can echo Hitchcock’s efforts and support the rights of indigenous peoples.

Rights for the Indigenous People

BY ANDY SEIKALY
STAFF WRITER

While the speakers at this year’s Youth Town Meeting focused on presenting the underlying causes of conflict in the world, Dr. Robert K. Hitchcock shed light on the effects and consequences that such conflicts can have on the inhabitants of tumultuous nations. Hitchcock, cultural anthropologist, and chair of the Department of Anthropology at Michigan State University, centered his session on the plight of indigenous peoples, discrimination, and the struggle for social justice. He began by enlightening his audience with a shocking statistic: there were over 22 million refugees worldwide in 2008. These refugees, people who have fled their homelands seeking asylum, face the difficult process of assimilation and are often targets of discrimination.

Not all refugees are uprooted for the same reason. According to Hitchcock, developments of countries and environmental causes as well as ethnic cleansing all contribute to this growing problem. For example, development refugees are forced from their homes and governments may seize their land in order to provide the means and space required for expansion. This forced removal, which has occurred in countries such as Botswana, typically results in the loss of ties to the land as well as cultural traditions. In addition to those who are completely expelled from their native lands, approximately 10 million people are displaced each year. Indigenous groups most often live in high diversity areas and can fall victim to unfortunate environmental situations such as droughts and deforestation that destroy their homes and cause these environmental inhabitants to find themselves internally displaced. This is especially prevalent in Southern Africa, Latin America, and Asia. Hitchcock went on to explain that because displaced peoples are not classified as refugees, it is extremely difficult for them to receive the aid that they so desperately need.

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Gender Inequality, Xenophobia, Economic Inequality, and Poverty
Continuation from Page 1
She advised the audience to gain awareness of global issues and learn from other cultures.
Bartell followed with a quote from Margaret Mead: “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.” He invited everyone to learn from their experiences at the conference and act on their newly acquired knowledge, saying that although awareness is valuable, the final step of implementation is always the most important. Emphasizing action more than anything else, he concluded by encouraging each person to practice global education and citizen and make “the age-old dream of peace and justice a reality.”
The first of the panellists to speak, Gupta opened by asking the audience whether they saw themselves as an individual or part of a larger group. “My answer would be both,” he said as he continued to explain the role “identity” plays in creating conflict. He demonstrated both the positive and negative sides of collective identity by using fans of sports teams as an example. Gupta went on to describe how identity consists of four aspects: “me, us, them, you.” He explained that conflict is resolved when people find an individual in the midst of them.” To close off with encouragement, he shared a childhood story and told the audience not to let the topics of the conference weigh them down.
Buelow talked about the difference between global and sex. He started off by informing the audience and asked, “please stand up if your gender is female.” After members of the audience stood up, he asked, “Now, please stand up if your gender is male.” There was a loud shuffle in the audience. This activity served to explain the difference between “sex” and “gender.” He asked the audience to “think about the media.”
Gyanendra’s manipulative power as an example of an internal force affecting this overarching conflict.
After a brief review of Nepal’s current and striving state, Taylor mentioned the different conflict: exit strategies, inclusive and participatory, future-oriented, new visions, non-violent and a general process of inquiry. To help further this understanding of “process of inquiry,” Taylor introduced an effective leadership technique that could be times used outside of the briefing: a technique that would provoke voices to be heard, as well as promote the idea of equity among the audience.
The Margolis Wheel technique, as she later came to call it, is composed of a series of three two-minute rounds in which “consultants” lay idle while “non-consultants” do the work. It is based on an interactive structure of an outer and inner circle in which active listening takes place and the voices of experts are heard. Consultants sitting in the inner circle refrain from talking during the first half, while “consultants” can individually express their views on a particular issue. During round two, consultants silently listen to their new partner for half of the round, and then speak for themselves in the other half.
Lastly, round three comprises an open discussion in which both partners are able to share, respond, and relate to each other’s ideas. After students performed this technique using the five sub-themes of this year’s WorldLink Youth Town Meeting (religious intolerance, economic inequality, gender inequality, xenophobia, and racism), Taylor commenced a reflection in which students shared their thoughts and feelings on this activity: the awkward, one-sidedness of round one; the frustrating, helplessness of round two; and easy, emotional connectedness within round three.
That students were to see the great significance and universal impact associated with being able to simply respond and ask questions when spoken. In this, students were left with an easily applicable tool and skill for their own schools and communities in which their minds could be better opened and their voices could be better heard.

Gender Inequality in the Media
BY ARIELLE PARDES
STAFF WRITER

Words such as “submissive,” “soft spoken,” and “sex-appeal” were the first to come up.
Ramirez discussed stereotypical women must constantly overcome: “slut vs. prude,” “uptight vs. submissive,” “smart and ugly vs. dumb and pretty.” With a high level of audience interaction, she brought up figures like Sarah Palin and Hilary Clinton and the media’s portrayal of them.
According to Ramirez, Sun & Moon helps women speak up against injustices. Ramirez shared a short video clip which showed how women living in conflict areas are “armed not with a gun but with a voice.” She encouraged the audience to listen to others and to reflect on the labels that the media places on them, saying that “you just have to be who you are.”

Although there are plenty of people one could blame for the gender biases and stereotypes in the media, Ramirez states that these are not the fault of any individual man or woman. She puts most of the blame on companies that profit from entertainment stereotypes and the people who support those companies. However, she also made sure to emphasize that standing up for women’s rights had little to do with having men. As someone in the audience said “It’s okay to be pissed, but don’t be a man-hater.”

If there was anything Ramirez was sure to emphasize, it was that while there are stereotypes in the media, they can be countered. Her quest for change includes two specific goals: education and empowerment. She says that refusing to buy products from big companies that are responsible for furthering gender inequality in the media is one way to do this. If consumers cannot make a profit on what their advertisements are trying to sell, then they predict a change will be made. With her strong ties to film, Ramirez also spoke about supporting films like “Real Women Have Curves,” which portrays women in a positive light.

Ramirez said that her favorite thing about being a part of a grassroots organization, is watching the change firsthand. Like Ramirez, the subjects of Sun & Moon’s documentaries are all real women with real stories, also hoping to promote real change.
Transforming Conflict into Love and Unity

BY YVETTE VASQUEZ AND THOMAS WILKES, WORLDLINK INTERNS

In the briefing called, “Transforming Conflict into Love and Unity through Forgiveness,” Azim Khamisa told the audience about how he lost his only son in a shooting and how he responded with compassion and forgiveness instead of violence and revenge. Khamisa started his briefing with a short news clip that covered the tragic night that his son, Tariq, 18, was killed. He worked as delivery man for a local pizza shop. Once arriving to his destination, he figured they had given him a non-existent address. As he was getting ready to head back to his work, he was approached by three 14 year old boys and one 18 year old who was identified as the leader. One of the 14 year olds was given a 9 millimeter gun and was given the order “Bust him, Bone.” He fired one round at Tariq, it entered under the left armpit, through the upper part of his chest, and came out of his right arm. It was considered a “perfect pass” by the coroners for it had injured every vital organ in its path. He passed away at the age of 20. His murderer was Tony Hicks, a 14-year old gang member.

Tony Hicks pled guilty to the crime and agreed to a sentence of 25 years to life. At his sentencing, he begged Khamisa for forgiveness. Khamisa decided to meet with his son’s murderer, Tony Hicks, and his grandfather, Ples Felix. Azim Khamisa visits Tony in prison to check in on him and see his progress. It is remarkable Kimisa has been doing all that he can to shorten Tony’s sentence.

In 1995, Khamisa started the Tariq Khamisa Foundation. In an act of forgiveness towards Hicks and his grandfather, Khamisa asked Felix to dedicate his life to an effort to fight violence in the youth. The two of them now visit young people’s schools to show them that they must stay away from violence. Violence, anger, and revenge can be avoided if people work together to come to peaceful solutions.

Khamisa’s powerful story of overcoming anger, forgiving mistakes, and supporting compassion was truly inspirational. He told the audience that, “We have to change, one soul at a time… The work that I’m doing is to teach the principles of known violence and peacemaking and start at a very early age.” As youth is raised in peace, they will pass peace on to others around them.

The day ended with smiles, nervousness, and fulfilled expectations. Excited chatter of over 700 students filled the auditorium as IPJ intern and junior at La Jolla Country Day, Jessica Wilson, commenced the closing plenary. Her introduction emphasized the “We vs. I” mentality aimed at fostering the sense of global community necessary in the resolution of conflict. Next, fellow IPJ intern and senior at Our Lady of Peace, Alix Reichert, introduced the closing panel: United States Department of State diplomat Amy Hyatt, an editing scholar and professor of Conflict Resolution and Anthropology, Kevin Avruch.

Hyatt began her address with appreciation for both the Worldlink conference and the “gift” of knowledge, perspective, and diversity it offers. Using her 24 years of experience in foreign affairs as a foundation, she highlighted the difference between pursuing national interests in a hostile and careless way, versus doing so in a way that achieves harmony, fosters cooperation and maintains sustainability. She emphasized the responsibility of being a role-model, and advocated the belief that through good choices comes positive change. Her final words conveyed the powerful message that above all, choosing understanding, mediation, and compromise is the only way we can begin to resolve the conflicts that plague our diverse world.

Avruch began his presentation by drawing attention to the theme of the closing plenary: “Where do we go from here?” He stressed that it was not enough to comprehend the root of world conflict, but that in order to effectively address it one needs to understand all its effects. He proceeded to break down the consequences of conflict into the psychologi- cal effect on the individual, the collective effect on local society, and the greater effect on the larger global system. He stressed that on all these levels, politics and civil mediation shrink in the face of violent extremism. According to Avruch, addressing all of this requires an “everywhere” attempt at peace in order to stop violence and advance safety.

The speech ended with a message of hope. “Human spirit can reign triumphant,” he affirmed, by truly equipping oneself with the knowledge to resolve conflict.

The conclusion of the afternoon plenary was given by IPJ interns Milia Fisher, senior at Francis Parker, and Alec Howard, senior at Cathedral Catholic High School. “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world.” He emphasized that it is the only thing that ever has.” The words of Margaret Meade via Howard resonated with the stimulated crowd of students. Their words summed up the messages, theme, and advocacies of the day: the choice of knowledge and awareness comes with the ability and responsibility to stand up for change.

Understanding global conflicts is the first step towards resolving them. As this generation prepares to inherit the world, understanding the myriad of problems, conferences such as WorldLink’s Youth Town Meeting prepare the new generation to combat conflict by understanding its roots, treating its effects, advocating for its resolution, and inspiring other youth to do the same.

Where Do We Go From Here?

BY MEGAN MURRAY
STAFF WRITER

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¿Cómo se define un conflicto y cuáles son las consecuencias después de un conflicto? Laura Taylor, Ph.D. candidata en la universidad de Notre Dame y presentadora del informe interactivo “Dándole vuelta a las tablas: Conflictos que transforma a la juventud,” les preguntó a los estudiantes estas preguntas. Al hacer eso, Taylor explicó que el conflicto no sólo tiene resultados negativos, sino que también algunos positivos. Ella atribuyó este proceso a la idea de que algunos conflictos pueden ser constructivos, donde se respetan las perspectivas duales. Antes de empezar su actividad interactiva, Taylor introdujo el Ciclo del Conflicto Violento, refiriéndose al caso de Nepal. Durante este ciclo, ella explicó que los conflictos violentos se estimulan inicialmente debido a una o más causas: recursos, energía política, religión, raza, y desigualdad económica. Eventualmente el problema crece hasta que por fin llega un momento de desensueno. Es aquí cuando uno puede llegar a un establecimiento como un trato de paz o una ley. Si el conflicto demuestra no ser constructivo, la paz sos tentable también se puede alcanzar. Es decir, es un “establecimiento magnífico” que fue inclusivo e incluyó la participación de todos los sectores sociales. Desafortunadamente, este ciclo del conflicto violento depende de las fuerzas internas y externas que alteran el conflicto en general; sea positivo o negativo, destructivo o constructivo. Con Nepal, por ejemplo, Taylor atribuyó la estructura hindú tradicional como la causa inicial del conflicto dentro de Nepal. Sin embargo, ella mencionó que el uso de manipulación del rey Gyanendra de Nepal como ejemplo de una fuerza externa que también afecta este conflicto. Después de una breve aclaración del estado actual de Nepal, Taylor mencionó seis principios del conflicto constructivo: estrategias de salida, inclusividad de participantes, el futuro, nuevas habilidades y proceso de investigación. Para clarificar sobre el “proceso de la investigación,” Taylor introdujo una técnica eficiente que pro vocaría que las voces de los jóvenes se escucharan. La Rueda de Margolis, el nombre de esta técnica, consiste de una serie de tres turnos de dos minutos en los cuales los “consultores” se quedan sentados mientras que los “no-consultores” se cambian asientos. Se basa de una estructura interactiva de un círculo externo que escucha a los miembros del círculo interno. Los consultores que se sientan en el círculo interno se refrenan de hablar durante el primer turno, mientras que sus so cios expresan sus opiniones sobre un tema en particular. Los consultores escucharon silenciosamente y después de unos turnos se cambiaron los papeles para que los escuchadores fueran escuchados. Los estudiantes platicaron sobre los cinco temas de este año de WorldLink. (Intolerancia religiosa, desigualdad económica, desigualdad del género, xenofobia, y racismo). Después de los mini ejercicios, Taylor comenzó una reflexión colectiva en la cual los estudiantes compartieron sus pensamientos, sentimientos sobre la actividad: la facilidad de escoger un solo lado del primer turno, la frustración de el segundo turno; y la con exión fácil y emocional del tercer turno. Con esto, los estudiantes pudieron ver la gran significación y el impacto universal asociado con poder responder y simplemente hacer preguntas cuando les estén hablando. Los estudiantes se retiraron con una herramienta fácil de aplicar en su vida diaria y la habilidad de usarla en sus propias comunidades en las cuales sus mentes podrían ser abiertas y sus voces podrían ser escuchadas.
Al preguntarse sobre algunos de los conflictos más grandes del mundo, los más comunes son las situaciones en Darfur or la Guerra en Iraq. En la 12va reunión anual de WorldLink, los estudiantes se enteraron de un peligro mucho más fuerte y menos obvio que esta ocurriendo en la República Democrática del Congo. Esta región tiene una situación tan peligroso que da más malestar que pistolas.

Jennifer Freeman es una defensora de los derechos de la mujer. Ha trabajado para varias organizaciones no-gubernamentales en Ghana, Canadá, y el Reino Unido. Freeman recibió su M.A. en estudios de paz y conflicto en la universidad de Ulster en Irlanda del Norte, y su B.A. en ciencia política, aleman y estudios europeos de la universidad de Victoria en Canadá.

Freeman describe la guerra en Congo como la “peor y más des能看到 del mundo.” Freeman sacó una foto que contenía varios artículos incluyendo teléfonos celulares, computadora, las mujeres es mas profundo - violación. “El decir que la violación contra mujeres y niños es algo que afecta a varias, es una subestimación,” dice Freeman. Los soldados violan indistintamente: mujeres, adolescentes, niños, e incluso infantes. Cuál es quizás lo más trágico de estos crímenes es que las mujeres no tienen a nadie para ayudar, ningún gobierno para buscar su justicia. Las mujeres frecuentemente quedan asustadas por miedo de amenazar las vidas de sus familias. Desafortunadamente, los actos sexuales violentos se consideran tabú en la cultura de Congo, y las mujeres están demasiado avergonzadas para buscar ayuda.

Freeman hizo la siguiente pregunta: ¿por qué es que las milicias van en busca de mujeres y muchachas? Psicológicamente, el enemigo busca la el castigo mas poderoso.” Mientras que la muerte es rápida, la violación se queda permanentemente en la memoria y es muy dolorosa.

Freeman notó que las mujeres son miembros dominantes en la sociedad, son las protectoras y sin ellas los pueblos no podrían sostenerse. Las milicias usan la violación como un método de control. El objetivo es dar miedo, porque cuando hay miedo la gente se va. Cuando se evacuan las áreas, las milicias se hacen dueños de todo lo que se deja. Mientras que el tono y el tema de la presentación de Freeman estuvo pesado y gráfico, ella se aseguró de que los delegados de WorldLink quedaran tranquilos y optimistas sobre la situación de Congo. Hay muchas organizaciones que están ayudando a las víctimas políticas y mujeres de las víctimas, así como ayuda psicológica. La solución verdadera, indica Freeman, es combatir el tabú de la violencia sexual, y trabajar para la reforma judicial. Freeman les asesoró a los delegados a que, al hacer compras, tomen conciencia y pregunten siempre de “dónde se hizo esto?” Otra sugerencia fue que los jóvenes informaran a sus amigos y familia sobre la situación en Congo como otro método significativo, y positivo.

Robert Buelow, coor- dinador de prevención para el Departamento Campus de Recursos de Asalto y Educación en la Universidad de California, Irvine, y licenciado de sociología con enfoque de estudios de la mujer, presentó sobre “Piensa Como un Hombre: Cambia de Mentalidad.”

La primera actividad de la sesión fue llamada “la energía de 10.” Seleccionó a cinco voluntarios para que contestaran unas preguntas contenidas en estadísticas. Si las respuestas de los voluntarios quedaban alrededor del 10% de la respuesta correcta, ganaban un premio. La primera pregunta pidió el porcentaje de mujeres que habian sido abusadas físicamente por sus maridos o novios: 31%. El segundo preguntó cuatro estudiantes universitarios de los Estados Unidos, el porcentaje de hombres que han sido violados: 25%. La tercera pregunta demostró el porcentaje - el 91% - de víctimas de violación que son mujeres, dándole entender a la audiencia que las mujeres no son las únicas víctimas de violación. La cuarta pregunta pedía el porcentaje de violaciones que fueron causada por alguien conocido a la víctima (e.g. familia o amigos): 77%. Las últimas dos preguntas dio lugar al porcentaje impactante; el 99% de la gente que viola son hombres. Al en- bornar más, Buelow explicó que de todas las violaciones cometidas, 99% de ellas son causadas por hombres o mujeres.

La segunda actividad se enfocó en los estereotipos. Buelow les dio a los estudiantes que les dijeran palabras que describen a los hombres. Buelow separó al grupo en pares para que cada equipo tuviera una discusión. Al escuchar los términos, Buelow los hiciera escribirlo dentro de una caja que el habia dibujado en el pizarrón. Algunos de los términos fueron: resistente, sin emociones, fuerte, audaz, construido, apuesto, orgulloso, in-teligente, independiente, macho y valiente. Buelow procedió a explicar que esos estereotipos son dados a los varones por ambos sexos, y que la razón por la que son aceptadas socialmente es porque la media y la sociedad en general lo han aceptado por varios años. Este ciclo, dice Buelow, solo puede ser roto si la sociedad entera va contra la norma.

La segunda parte de la actividad era pensar en palabras que no se utilizan para describir a los hombres. Buelow continuó a dejar a la audiencia en pares. Eventualmente, las palabras que los estudiantes sugerieron eran: débil, feo, pobre, asustado, grasa, mudo, pequeño, gay, bonito, needy, adorable, desamparado, y petite. Estas palabras, alguien notó, generalmente son utilizadas para describir a una mujer. Por esta razón, el género femenino se considera como más débil. También, el género femenino en si ha creado la noción de que las mujeres son más débiles que los hombres. Este tipo de mentalidad es exactamente el raíz del problema de la desigualdad. Buelow estresó lo importante que es que esta generación rechace los estereotipos. Las mujeres y los hombres tienen las mismas características y no debe haber razón por la que ninguno de los dos sexos deban ser cualquier cosa que uno no desee ser.

En conclusión, Buelow terminó con lo siguiente, “necesitamos salir de nuestra mentalidad y analizar los estereotipos.” Las sugerencias que compartió con los estudiantes eran: ser más abiertos, aceptar y entender a otros, mantener actitudes positivas, ser críticos de los mensajes enviados por los medios, y reconocer la importancia y valor de las mujeres. Buelow terminó diciendo que necesitamos cambiar el pensamiento acerca de la sociedad género-equilibrada está más cercano a accesible.
My name is Nyuo Tong. I am from Southern Sudan, and I have witnessed horrors during the Sudanese Civil War that I hope none of you ever will experience. This is not an attempt to celebrate the virulence of the Christian South or to condemn the Muslim North. Nor is it my intention to depict the enemy as a whole. I am writing as the enemy. This is a story. This is my journey that led me from the core of a universal problem—the prejudice that divides people according to their skin color—to a realization that only through education can we, as societies and nations achieve true liberty and justice.

I have learned that race-based hatred sets God’s children against each other, and makes one group of people believe that they have the right to exist, and the other, whoever the other may be, must be destroyed. I have learned through my personal struggles in my country that education is the only weapon that can bring lasting peace, not only in Sudan but also in conflict zones around the world. Education is power, and only by harnessing this power, can we change the world and ensure a future of peace, not bloodshed.

I was born in 1991 in the Second Sudanese Civil War, in Bhar El Ghazal, a border region that separates Northern and Southern Sudan. My father was the village chief. During this time, the war was at its peak of intensity and many people fled to either Khartoum or Kenya to survive. But my father refused to flee; he believed his responsibility as the chief was to stay and protect those who still lived in the village.

In 1996, when I was five years old, my father was arrested and sentenced to death because he refused to join a government-armed rogue militia. He escaped from prison and went into hiding. The militia came to my village, captured me playing in the village and drove me to the family home where I found my mother beaten and unconscious on the ground and the rest of my family grouped under a tree; their cans—and bought new school uniform and school materials. When I walked into the school nearest to the camps, Arab boys taunted me, calling—balled, Janubi, abu, stupid, Southerner, slave in Arabic—anything demeaning their mouths could utter. But I could not see them; I was proud and excited to start school.

Eventually, I was taken to the headmaster’s office and told that I needed more than a uniform and books to be accepted in this school. Why could they not accept me? I did not know. I was too young. It was nothing more than a year and a half of cruciating pain to know that they could not accept me because I was a Southerner and a Christian.

A few months after my hopes of ever attending a school were shattered, my mother moved us from the refugee camps to a more stable Arab neighborhood in Khartoum. Taking 12 cans in my bag, in which she cleaned more than five houses, and washed and ironed piles of clothes for Arab mistresses, she thought that living in a secure Arab neighborhood would help her work and earn enough money to put me in a private school. But even her endless toil could not provide the government the money it was so expensive and she made only enough money to cover our necessities—food and shelter.

This setback only encouraged my desire to learn. By age 7, I was able to read. I had collected a library of about four hundred books, by gathering discarded novels from among the refugee camps. I read about 250 books by Arab women who paid me to deliver breakfast every morning to their children at a nearby school, and used this money to buy used books. But the real bonus of my job was the lessons that I overheard in schoolrooms. I would linger to memorize them. At age eleven, I discovered the St. Joseph Center for Refugee Children, where I learned to read and write in Arabic. There I met a Sudanese college student named Vivi Hassan, who introduced me to poetry, which became my passion and inspiration. Poetry empowered me.

With my ability to read and write Arabic, my desire to experience the poverty, oppression, desp air, and the pain of being a refugee—was no longer an insuperable fate, but a challenge to be faced, an ‘attack’ to be overcome. I read and read. Literature deepened my understanding of the conflict and the injustices of a refugee. Suddenly I found a vocation. I wrote poetry about our suffering and recited it at weddings and once at Christmas.

My mother realized the limitations of Khartoum and, determined to give us an education, she took the family to Cairo, Egypt. While Sudanese refugee children can legally attend school in Egypt, they must possess three documents that few ever attain; school transcripts, letters from their embassies, and official refugee status. I had none of these, so I enrolled at St. Lwanga’s, a refugee educational center run by the Comboni Missionaries in Egypt. As refugees in Egypt, unlike in Sudan, I finally received an education, but in terms of racial discrimination, Egypt was no different from Khartoum. We suffered the same tragedy in Egypt because of our skin color. We were publicly harassed, robbed, insulted and called ‘Lamu, an Egyptian-Arabic racist term for blacks. Many Southern Sudanese refugees, especially the young, joined gangs to protect themselves and their families. Others watched and felt helpless—they saw Egyptian racism as another episode of oppression. They believed it could be customized to it and, by tolerating it, they encouraged it.

I could not join the angry, violent refugee gangs as a means of protection. Nor could I watch and dwell in self-pity or accept degradation and deliberate humiliation. I delved into philosophy and poetry, for the first time, made me wonder—who am I? What do I stand for?

I realized that we refugees never had a sense of space or place of who we truly were. Nor did we know or care about what we really stood for. Since we fled our homes in Southern Sudan, we were asked to be Sudanese, or in Egypt, we were subjected to humiliation, injustice, intolerance, and degrada tion. We were asked to be neither a nation nor liberty, nor that we had, that we had no rights, that we were slaves, that we were an inferior race and nothing more. I found that many refugees truly believed it, accepted it, acted upon it, and saw their lives and the world around them through it.

I was determined to discover the discovery when it became clear to me that we refugees had genuine power and that our lives did not need to be determined by our oppressors. Our actions did not have to be reactions, mere reflections of what our oppressors did to us. If Egyptian racism and violence against us, it was their business. It never was about what Egyptians were; it was always about who we were.

My desire for learning grew stronger in Egypt. My obsession with books peaked and I read voraciously. By age 14, I had read 25 books, including 15 in Arabic. Rose, Spinoza, and Kant won my admiration. I wanted to be a human rights attorney. I wanted to make a difference and I believed that a better life for my people, a brighter future for every child. And I needed a good education to make that happen.

In 1996, from my journey of oppression in Khartoum and Cairo, Egypt, I realized that I you like to you two things. First, nothing destroys us without our consent. The tyrant might usurp our land and abuse our sovereignty, but we can never be made to inflict upon us unimaginable pain, but the tyrant can never touch our dignity or our right to our lives. He may try to tear our family apart and our inner-sovereignty. We alone have jurisdiction over our lives. Only few refugees understood that—my mother did, and as a result, I found new hope.

Second, the Brazilian author Paulo Coelho says, in his masterpiece The Alchemist, “when you want something, all the universe conspires in helping you achieve it.” This can not be more true! Despite the uncertainties and adversities I’ve gone through, today I am not only surviving. I am living and thriving.

I am living and thriving. I am grateful to be here, and I am grateful for the opportunity I have been given to share my story, a story that is my own and yet belongs to so many young people from Sudan, from Chad, from the Congo, and from many other places.

This is my story. My journey that led me from the core of a universal problem—the prejudice that divides people according to their skin color—to a realization that only through education can we, as societies and nations achieve true liberty. Let us, for the sake of humanity and for preservation of human life and dignity, become our prejudices and understand our differences. —Nyuo Tong, founder and chair, Self Sudan. To learn more, please visit: www.selfsudan.org
Announcing next year’s topic!!!

Development: Fighting Global Poverty

Education Healthcare
Food Security and Agriculture
Trading and Financial Systems
Infrastructure and Governance

Friday, January 22, 2010

Save the Date!

WorldLink Journalists

Each year, the process of selecting journalists for the annual WorldLink Youth Town Meeting begins. WorldLink journalists are chosen for their writing abilities, journalistic skills, and level of interest. The WorldLink Youth Town Meeting is composed of students from many different schools. The following letters come from some of the journalists chosen for this year.

As college is rapidly approaching I have been contemplating on a career path to lead me throughout my life. Writing has always been a passion of mine, which has brought me to the idea of becoming a journalist. When the opportunity to become a journalist in the “WorldLink” reader became available, I wanted to seize the opportunity. It is a great experience to prepare me for a career in Journalism. Along with it being a great experience it also means a great deal to me to be able to voice my opinion on a particular topic that I see as a major global issue.

Between the many outlining global issues focused in this years discussion, religious intolerance stood out to me greatly. I have been raised as a Catholic and strongly believe in the Word of God. I could not imagine being stripped of my rights to practice my religion and being forced to worship another god or idol. I strongly believe that everyone has a right to their own beliefs and should not be forced out of their will to practice another religion that they do not agree with. In recognizing this major global issue I want to voice my ideas and illustrate how to solve religious discrimination and intolerance.

Cassandra Getchel
Escondido High School

Having served as a WorldLink journalist last year, I would love to have the opportunity to observe and help the WorldLink newspaper once again. I thoroughly enjoyed having the chance to listen and take note of what the speakers had to say last year and this year’s topics provide even more excitement in global trends and occurrences. Moreover, I have continued to enjoy journalism activities within my school and local community. I have begun my second year as editor-in-chief of my school newspaper, The Palette, directing an entire redesign and page spread. In addition, I had the opportunity to enhance my skills as an editor at Northwestern University’s High School Journalism Institute this summer. I would love to have the opportunity to help edit the WorldLink Reader and make it the best it has ever been and I believe I have the capacity to do so.

WorldLink gives students an opportunity to hear what experts in their respective fields have to say about the latest global phenomena; being able to participate as an observer and editor at the conference would be a treat.

Matt Wong
La Jolla Country Day

I am interested in being a journalist for the WorldLink Youth Town Meeting on January 23rd, 2009 for a couple reasons. Firstly, I am eager to listen to and analyze the information the various guest speakers will present and develop an article which captures the key points of their presentation. I also want to continue to develop my journalistic skills, which I already practice by serving as Sports Editor of my school newspaper, the El Cid. I see WorldLink as an opportunity to learn a great deal about topics that affect the entire world while also improving my writing and communication skills as a journalist.

One topic that I am interested in at this meeting is economic inequality. I feel that poverty is a pressing issue in our world today and that we all need to be continually reminded of. For this reason, I am interested in being part of the presentations and discussion surrounding this important issue and am also going to write an article about the events in the WorldLink reader.

Clint Akarmann
Cathedral Catholic High School

My name is Andi Seikaly and I am a junior at the Academy of Our Lady of Peace (OLP). You came to speak to our branch of Amnesty International yesterday about WorldLink and I am very interested in the journalism position that you mentioned. Writing is the way in which I feel most comfortable expressing myself. I think that written word, as well as spoken word, is extremely powerful and is one of the best ways to provide others with information.

Because WorldLink will be presenting information on issues of the greatest importance, I would like to be involved in the process of relating that information to others. I was also attracted to the bilingual nature of the publication as I am fluent in Spanish and would be able to translate articles written in English if need be. I am interested in ensuring that even those who cannot participate can at least read about WorldLink.

The WorldLink 12th annual Youth Town Meeting topic that attracted my attention the most is the section on racism and xenophobia. While all of the topics that will be discussed are of great merit, racism and xenophobia stood out to me because I find that both are very prevalent right here in Southern California. I think that many people harbor resentment and hatred toward Mexican immigrants and consider them inferior. They exhibit a fear of those who are different from them. Though racism and xenophobia have unfortunately become issues worldwide, they can also be seen right here in our own back yard.

I would love to be a part of reporting on these, or any of the issues to be presented at the Youth Town meeting. I have written articles for newsletters about a peace conference I attended over the summer in Minnesota, but I have never been able to be a part of anything as big as WorldLink. Thank you very much for presenting this opportunity.

Sincerely,

Andi Seikaly

Youth Town Meeting News Team

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(SCPA)

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Academy of Our Lady of Peace: Andi Seikaly; Bishops School: Megan Murray; Canyon Crest Academy: Amara Trivedi; Cathedral Catholic High School: Clint Ackerman; CETYS: Melissa DePineiro; Escondido High School: Cassandra Gretchel, Margarita Vargas; Instituto Mexicano Americano Noroeste: Cecilio Lanza; La Jolla Country Day: Matt Wong; San Diego School of Creative and Performing Arts: Rachelle Aguillera, Sandra Antion, Aleli Balaguer, Celeste Bogle, Latrice Brown, Krystal Decena, David Dixon, Monica Elizondo, Rebecca Knell, Shane Mack, Kathleen Maninmitt, Sherue Morales, Cassandra Orrantia, Arielle Pardes, Johana Rojas, Vanessa Zarate

Interns, Volunteers, and Amazingly Wonderful Friends of WorldLink


Participating Schools and Youth Organizations

Academy of Our Lady of Peace, The Bishop’s School, Canyon Crest Academy, Cathedral Catholic High School, Charter School of San Diego, Clairemont High School, Crawford High School, Escondido High School, Francis Parker School, Grauer School, High Tech High International, Instituto Mexico Americano Noroeste, John Muir SChool, La Costa Canyon High School, La Jolla Country Day School, La Jolla High School, Mueller Center for Leadership Development, National University Academy, Otay Ranch High School, Preparatoria CETYS Universidad Campus Tijuana, Preparatoria Federal Lazaro Cardenas, San Diego School of Creative and Performing Arts, Sierra Vista School/GRF, Sunset High School

On the Brink
Good afternoon Youth Town Meeting Delegates. I would like to tell you a story which I came across during the process of researching my topic for the WorldLink Reader, Global Gender Inequality. It simultaneously reveals the violent nature of gender conflict and the hope which still exists that someday these conflicts will end.

In the village of Nagpur, India a thug named Akku Yadav ruled with an iron fist. He brutally terrorized a low-caste community, systematically killing and raping members of a lower cast community who received absolutely no protection from the apathetic police. Yadav terrorized the town with his brutality. He murdered without cause and raped at every chance. However, there was one family Yadav always left alone the Narayanes. This was because all five of the Narayane children had gone to college, a feat almost unheard of in the undeserved and illiterate community.

While on a visit home Usha Narayane witnessed Akku Yadav attack a neighbor. Usha went to the police, despite the gang’s warnings. The gangs soon returned and surrounded the Narayane household threatening to disfigure, rape, and murder her. Instead of panicking, Usha turned on the gas and threatened to light a match. The gang backed off. The neighbors, seeing somebody finally stand up to Akku Yadav, gathered in the street. Soon a mob of people protesting forced Akku Yadav to turn himself in.

On the day of Yadav’s hearing, hundreds of women who had been victimized by Akku marched from the slum to the courthouse to witness him face justice. Usha has now begun a new life as a social activist and she is now helping the slum dwellers make food and clothing that they can sell together to raise their incomes.

Ove the course of the research that I did for WorldLink, once in a while I would come across stories like Usha’s. Stories that prove that even in the darkest depths of the African jungle, in towns ravaged by femicide, in communities torn apart by hatred, the human spirit can reign triumphant over the greatest of evils and worst of suffering.

As you come away from this conference, I challenge you to raise your spirit to a new level. I dare you to become truly aware of the conflicts which are at this moment tearing apart our world. Elsewhere I’ve mentioned the seriousness to a level that truly allows you to understand the problems like those of Usha and her family.

You make the conscious decision to live your life with an understanding of the conflicts which so many people endure on a daily basis. You will see that the violent conflicts you read about in the newspaper, and you have heard about at this conference aren’t really so far away. You will become part of the force which seeks to eradicate global conflict of all forms. You will become a force which unites all humans in a common bond—a need for hope, for love, and for the ability to live life in peace. It is this common bond shared by all people, be they from San Diego, Tijuana, Mexico, or Nagpur, India which links us to one another. Maybe the struggle for peace will become your life, the way it was for Nelson Mandela, who coined the phrase “the struggle is my life”. Maybe you will join the ranks of the Dalai Lama, Mother Theresa and Usha Narayane and the IPJ, all of whom have worked tirelessly to alleviate global conflict.

By coming to the IPJ and actively participating in this event today, you are making a difference. You are truly seeing the new world of tomorrow, remember to be optimistic, and when you return to your schools and families, remind them about your experiences today. You can do this by creating a club, organizing a Youth Forum or your own, supply them and the knowledge you have found today to make the world a better place.
Jennifer Freeman has worked with various nongovernmental organizations in Ghana, the United Kingdom, Canada and in Ugandan refugee settlements on issues of women’s rights and peacebuilding, supporting women with HIV/AIDS and conducting psychosexual programs for war-affected youth. She has an M.A. in Peace and Conflict Studies from the University of Ulster in Northern Ireland and a B.A. in Political Science, German and European Studies from the University of Victoria in Canada.

Rabbi Rabbi L. Goldstein is the executive director of Hillel of San Diego and the campus director at the University of California, San Diego. Rabbi Goldstein has worked as a group leader and program director at various Jewish and interfaith learning trips in the developing world, including Central America, Southeast Asia and Africa, for college students through the American Jewish World Service.

Dipak K. Gupta, born in India, is the Fred J. Hansen Professor of World Peace and a professor in the Program of Political Science at San Diego State University. He received his Ph.D. in Economics from Viva-Bharati University in Santiniketan, India and the University of Pittsburgh, and earned his Ph.D. in the area of Economic and Social Development from the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs at the University of Pittsburgh. His numerous publications include the books Understanding Terrorism and Political Violence: The Life Cycle of Birth, Growth, Transformation, and Demise and Who are the Terrorists?

Imam Taha Hassan is currently serving as the Imam of the Islamic Center of San Diego (ICSD). He joined ICSD in September 2004 after serving as a youth counselor at the Colorado Muslim Youth Foundation. Imam Taha graduated from the Institute of Islamic Sciences at the University of Algiers in Algiers, Algeria and served as a high school teacher and Imam in Tenes, Algeria for 10 years before coming to the United States. At ICSD, he also provides marriage and family counseling, youth programming and Islamic educational services.

Robert K. Hitchcock is professor and chair of the Department of Anthropology at Michigan State University. He is a cultural anthropologist whose work focuses on indigenous peoples, with particular emphasis on development, environmental justice and human rights. Currently, he focuses on genocide and conflict management issues involving indigenous peoples worldwide.

Mary Ellen Jeppia is a native of Concord, N.H., and is currently a junior at the University of Southern California (USC). She is majoring in Business, Japanese and Religion, with a minor in International Relations. At USC she is a member of the Religion, Identity and Global Governance Project and the Interfaith Council.

Azim Khamis, born in Kenya, was a successful international investment banker for 35 years. He became a social activist after his 20-year-old son, Tariq, was murdered in January 1995, by Tony Hicks, a 16-year-old local school boy. Religion formed where they used to be “victims at both ends of the gun,” he gave Tariq and founded the Tariq Khamis Foundation (TKF). Committing his life to fighting the continuing cycle of violence among youth, today he partners with TONY’s grandfather to tell their story and message of forgiveness through TKF’s Violence Impact Forums to youth across the country.

Mya Kyl, 18, was born in Burma, but spent most of her life in a refugee camp in Thailand. She arrived in San Diego with her family in 2007. She left her homeland because of Burmese army oppression – including killing, torture, rape and enslavement – of the Karen people, one of seven ethnic groups in Burma. Kyl attended Groomsot High School and is now at the Charter School of San Diego preparing to take the GED test. Her goal is to become a doctor and return to Thailand to help her nation and people.

Benjamin Lee is the coordinator of Youth Ministry at St. Michael’s Catholic Church in Poway. He graduated from the University of San Diego (USD) in May 2007 with a double B.A. in English Literature and Theological and Religious Studies. While at USD, Lee interned at the John B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice and served in the office of University Ministry as a residential ministry leader. In the summer of 2006, he volunteered for seven weeks in the urban slums of Manila. He will be pursuing a dual master’s degree in International Relations and Theology at Boston College this fall.

Fanno Musa, 17, has been involved with The Aja Project for three years. As a natural leader in the after-school participateory photography program in San Diego for refugee and immigrant youth, Al-Ankawi and his family moved to El Cajon in 2007 after leaving their home in Iraq. His photographs and narratives, which have been exhibited at the New Children’s Museum and the Malcolm X Library, have helped to create community events and a program support intern, and is also active in the Multi-Media and Visual Arts Program at Crawford High School. Musa, originally from Somalia, moved to City Heights in 2004 after leaving the Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya.

Lance E. Nelson is professor of Theology and Religious Studies at the University of San Diego and director of Religious Studies at the University of San Diego. He is a cultural anthropologist whose work focuses on indigenous peoples, with particular emphasis on development, environmental justice and human rights. Currently, he focuses on genocide and conflict management issues involving indigenous peoples worldwide.

Ben Thomson is vice president of international development for the organization Invisible Children (IC). He graduated from the University of California, San Diego, with a B.A. in economics and went on to implement and manage the IC Bracelet Campaign in Uganda. He currently oversees the Mission department of IC and spearheads their economic initiatives and new programs.
I really enjoyed exploring and sharing my views while expanding my knowledge and my opinions with the help of my peers. This meeting helped develop me as an opinionated young adult in the modern world. I will highly recommend this program to my peers and seek out participating in this program again in the future.

I see this as a great event, and I’m sure that many others like me will meditate about this. Coming to WorldLink’s Youth Town Meeting was an awesome and incredible experience and I’ll love to come again another year.

It is important to be aware of our world and we need to realize that we are the change we want to see. The only solution to conflict is education and this is exactly what I qualify as education.

This type of Youth Town Meeting was just as important as the issues I learn about on T.V. The difference was listening to the information from the people themselves.

It connects me to other interested youth, gives me knowledge about world issues that affect us all, and fosters peace through awareness and understanding.

This is a golden opportunity for every member of our future leaders. The knowledge that I have acquired within 40 min. seminars is far more complex and important than anything I could read. Interaction leads to communication, communication leads to discussion and discussion leads to change.

My world view is continually evolving and I look forward to this meeting each year. As a third year participant, I am still learning more with each speaker. This meeting is an excellent precedent for other organizations and I hope many more youth will continue to benefit from this unique learning experience.

I think talking to kids my own age about their refugee journeys was the most important point I learned from WorldLink. It allowed me to experience the world through another person’s eyes.

It brought together international people and perspectives highlighting the unique points of each group’s perspective, but also the potential for unity and understanding. Additionally it accelerated the need for action to end the ignorance and rejection of people with different identities.

I think it is highly important for today’s youth to be more educated on these global issues that they could, with some effort, put an end to. I believe that if the youth are educated now they will be more inclined to pursue a career in helping others in need.

After hearing Thomas Awaipo speak my peers and I have decided to start a fundraiser of clothing, books, shoes, etc. to send to Ghana and Africa. I have also decided to change my consumer lifestyle.

“With my fellow youth we learn together and grow together and understand together and ultimately we take action together.”