

WORLDLINK

Youth Town Meeting Newspaper

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Gender Inequality, Xenophobia, Economic Inequity, 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 region, 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 Shiley 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 five sub-topics: gender inequality, racism, xenophobia, religious intolerance, and economic inequity.

After the students ate breakfast in the Shiley Courtyard, they moved to Shiley Theater, where the

Youth Town Meeting commenced with an opening plenary.

This year's opening plenary focused on explaining the underlying causes of conflict in our world. This

the Youth Town Meeting's goal of increasing the youth's awareness and understanding of the atrocities that people around the world face every-day.

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 youths' 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 the xenophobia in South Africa.

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introduction to some of the causes of the world's conflicts was given through the speeches of panelists and WorldLink interns. The panel was comprised of experts from various backgrounds and professions. These speakers each contributed to

Youth Turn Tables

BY ALELI BALAGUER
STAFF WRITER

What exactly is conflict and what results from it? **Laura Taylor**, Ph.D. student at the University of Notre Dame and ever-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 process to the common idea of constructive conflict, where dual perspectives are respected and the resulting possibilities are endless. 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

underlying root causes: resources, political power, religion, race, and

tion 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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economic inequality, to name a few. With these root causes, manifesta-

Perspectives of Former Refugees

BY SANDRA ANTON
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 settle 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 country due to threats from the Iraqi government. Her father was told that his daughters were at risk of getting kidnapped and would be forced into a life of imprisonment, having to obey whoever took them. On December 28, 1999, her family left Iraq to seek refuge in Austria. At the refugee camp, she met girls from different countries and at the age of 11 celebrated her first multi-cultural birthday party.

"It has been that way ever since," she explains. When Blejani first arrived in the United States, her family received assistance from Catholic

Charities Diocese of San Diego. They supplied her family with clothes, food, and shelter. Blejani praises them for their compassion, "without them, we wouldn't be here right now."

While attending middle school and high school, Blejani did very well academically, and was involved in many activities including cheerleading and softball. Blejani comments that she never felt left out, "if anything mean was said about me, it was never said to my face." She now goes to Grossmont



College, and is studying to become a nurse.

Al-Ankawi, 14, was born in Iraq as well. Shortly after the Iraq war began in 2003, U.S. troops would sometimes barge into the Al-Ankawi home uninvited, frightening the whole family. They were terrified that the instability would destroy the family, and with the death of Saddam Hussein, the situation became even more dangerous. His family moved to the neighboring country of Jordan in order to remain

safe. Al-Ankawi was very reluctant to leave everything behind. "Everyone was crying," he explains somberly. But when he finally came to the United States, he was delighted to see that everyone was so diverse. "I was very surprised to see several Arabic Markets in San Diego," he states. People weren't judgmental about where he came from. "Being Muslim does not mean we support terrorists."

Kyi, 18, was born in Burma. Kyi describes Burma as the epitome of beauty, but because of oppression by the

sion 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 seriously.

Kyi came to the United States in hopes of getting an education. "There are more opportunities to go to school," she explains. She is currently studying 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 there, 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; she had never seen so many cars or such 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."

Common Misperceptions of Political Violence

BY ALYSSA HALL
STAFF WRITER

At the 12th Annual WorldLink Youth Town Meeting, students were faced with serious topics: religious intolerance, gender inequality, xenophobia, and racism—all relating 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 economics relates 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 causes political violence and terrorism?" The answers that followed were poverty, hopelessness, and power; however, Gupta clarified on the typical terrorist structure. He explained that most people incorrectly assume that the reason political violence occurs is be-



cause terrorist groups want to cause commotion 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, leaders 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 weak-

nesses 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.

Economic inequity, then, sometimes results in terrorists being able to manipulate and influence more impoverished populations. Once there is a large enough group 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 will take 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. Gupta explained that the best thing to do was to "get to know" the people who we believe to be terrorists. In order to dispel common misperceptions associated with terrorist activities, one must understand the reasons behind their violent actions, and realize that there is no single set of principles for a world full of diverse cultures and religions.

Sustainability is Good Business

BY YVETTE VASQUEZ
STAFF WRITER

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 the war and its significance in ending the conflict and developing the country’s economic

independence. He continued by explaining how conflict interrupts the economy and how that in turn

the world currently is and the role that people in other countries play through the decisions they make by

fort 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

affects local communities and the livelihood of its residents. He also explained how “interconnected”

saying, “what I choose to buy has impacts across the world.”

An example of a current ef-

bringing awareness to how they affect the world as a global consumer.

The Dangers of Xenophobia

BY MATTHEW WONG
STAFF WRITER

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 map of Africa to help the audience visualize the area, Bernstein described the sectional violence between the 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, Massaleet, and

Zaghawa 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, gunmen on horseback,

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

sands 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 stray 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.”



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

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 thou-

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.

Hyatt believes 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 these 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 arms, diplomats usually work overseas in secured 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

North Korea for the Bureau of Intelligence and Research in Washington D.C.

Hyatt understands the need for people in this line of work in 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 foreign 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.”



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 apartness, “separateness,” and is at one level similar to the segregation that occurred in the United States. However, it is different because apartheid went beyond 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.

Williams showed 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 accompany 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 against other African immigrants who come 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 \$52 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

20 percent for the past 20 years.

During the apartheid, blacks were barred from living in Johannesburg, and those working in city lived outside in Alexandra, a black township. The violence that occurred in May was targeted against Alexandra residents from countries such as Zimbabwe, Mozambique, and Congo, where fear brewed that these strangers were taking their jobs. During the apartheid, those same neighboring countries helped many South Africans. Williams then went on to ask why they had not attacked the rich, or the whites; “If I were to transpose ethnic lines over map lines, it would all overlap,” so why were they killing people of their own cultural group?

Although it is longer required by law for blacks to live outside the city, many communities remain largely divided. Known as the miraculous transition in 1994, from the lack of bloodshed, Williams said that Mandela basically compromised with the whites saying, “we’ll get the political power, and you keep your wealth.” The government chose not to redistribute the wealth, protecting the notion of private property, and since then, the gap between rich and poor has widened.

A student asked if there are current government actions responding to the economic situation in South Africa, and Williams expressed that the election in a few months, could bring some improvement many South Africans are hoping for.

Finding Unity in Religious Differences

BY AMARUTA TRIVEDI
STAFF WRITER

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

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 inclusion and understanding. They claimed that instead of fighting over differences, all religions can unite through their similarities. In this case Judaism, Catholicism, and Buddhism all united in love, peace, and a calling to work in goodness. Through this unity, they demonstrated how all individuals can promote tolerance for every 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.

Act Like A Man: Think Outside the Box

BY AILEEN PANTOJA
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Robert Buelow, violence prevention coordinator for the Campus Assault Resources and Education Department at the University of California, Irvine, and Bachelor recipient 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. Buelow then proceeded to explain that those stereotypes are given to males by both sexes, and the reason they are socially acceptable is because the media portrays the perfect male this way. This cycle can only be broken if society as a whole goes against the norm.

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 that, "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.

Story of Hope Inspires Delegates

BY CLINT ACKERMAN
STAFF WRITER

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 Ghana, Awiapo 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 source 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 many of 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 edu-

cation 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

Hunters,” who together find a box of gold but end up killing each other instead of sharing what they had found. He also commented that, “we find ourselves in a world consumed by greed...unless we can deal with greed, greed will deal with us.” He urged the delegates 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 villages” and that people are willing to support education for their children. Despite the previous problems of poverty and corrupt 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 was visible throughout his presentation. “I celebrate life,” Awiapo said, “I’m happy I’m alive.”



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

History, Religion, and Peacebuilding

BY CASSANDRA ORRANTIA
STAFF WRITER

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 Theology and 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, religion becomes the 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 wages 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 legitimize 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

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 USC’s Interfaith Council. The Interfaith Council is a group dedicated to promoting religious tolerance through understanding and action. While Professor Nelson identified and elaborated on the underlying conflict, Jebbia gave listeners an example of peace 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, service and practice, rather than doctrine and by asking “what is your religion going to do to help?”

The conference left listeners 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 today, people most often think of situations like the genocide in Darfur, or the war in Iraq. At the 11th Annual Youth Town Meeting, students were made aware of a much scarier and less-presented danger taking place in the Democratic Republic of the Congo—an issue whose harm cuts deeper than weapons.

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 refers to the war in Congo as the "world's worst and most neglected war." Before Freeman elaborated on this statement, she showed the students a picture containing material items found everyday in America—cellular phones, laptop computers, diamonds and gold jewelry. Freeman stressed that these insignificant items, which we have all owned at some point, are fueling the fire in Congo. Because Congo is so rich with natural resources other countries use for goods, Free-

man states that, "wealth is one of its [Congo's] destroyers."

The history of Congo's war is complex. It started in 1998, and its roots are embedded in colonialism and border conflict. The exploitation of minerals and people led to ambitious and violent undertakings, take for example the genocide in 1994.



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 rape.

"To say that rape is widely

expanded is a gross understatement," says Freeman. 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

speaking out in fear of threatening the lives of their families. Also, sexually violent acts are considered taboo in Congolese culture, and women are too ashamed to seek help.

Freeman posed the question: why are women and girls being targeted by the militias? Psychologically, the enemy searches for the ultimate power, the ultimate punishment. While death is quick, rape leaves behind the permanent and painful memory. Freeman brought up the fact that women are key members in society; they are the providers and the caretakers, without them villages could not sustain themselves. Militias are looking to claim territories, and rape is the method of control. The objective is to spark fear in areas; when there is fear there is flight. When areas are evacuated, militias will plunder the location for resources.

While the tone and subject matter of Freeman's lecture was heavy and graphic, she made certain that WorldLink delegates left reassured and optimistic about Congo's current situation. There are many organizations that are providing medical assistance to rape victims, as well as psychological and couples' counseling. The real solution is combating the taboo of sexual violence, and working diligently with judicial reform. Freeman encouraged students to shop conscientiously and always ask, "Where did this come from?" On a smaller scale, things as simple as telling others about the war in Congo can make a significant, and positive impact.

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.

But 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 re-

moval 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, he also suggests studying 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.

8 Briefings

Gender Inequality, Xenophobia, Economic Inequity, and Poverty Continuation from Page 1

She advised the audience to gain awareness of global issues and learn from one another.

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 attained 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 do their part as an active global citizen and make "the age-old dream of peace and justice a reality."

The first of the panelists 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 "I realize you as an individual in the midst of them." To close off with encouragement, he shared a childhood story and told the audience to not let the topics of the conference weigh them down.

Buelow talked about the difference between gender and sex. He started off by involving 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,

Let's think about the music we listen to, the movies that we watch, television, professional wrestling, and the messages that sends about gender." Buelow called for a realization of the conflict that arises out of a rigid division of gender.

Bernstein shared with the audience how conflicts always seem to stem from a deeper issue; something that might not be easy to discover or solve. She told a story of one man from the book who, around the time of former president Ronald Reagan's death, was injured in a car accident. In the hospital, he heard about Ronald Reagan on the radio and in response told Bernstein that he "hated Reagan." When she asked why, he told her that when tanks rolled in and destroyed his village, they had Reagan stickers on them. She went on to say that these conflicts always have more to them than what can be found on the internet, in books, or on the news. There are things that one really has to dig in order to find.

Imam Taha Hassane captured

some of Islam's teachings of peace and equality. He stressed the importance of understanding other cultures in order to fight harmful stereotypes. "When you want to learn about any faith or ideology, go to the source of it," he said. "There are those who abuse their own religious teachings... those who use their religion to justify their evil actions." He urged the audience to learn about Islam in order to dispel the common misconceptions about Muslims.

During the opening plenary, the crowd's reaction reflected everything from horror to compassion. There were gasps of astonishment, scowls of anger, and the shifting discomfort. The goal of the opening plenary was not to scare or distress the audience, but rather to inform delegates of what is really taking place around the world; to get them motivated and willing to make a difference in the world and put an end to these atrocities. And so, the delegates proceeded to their briefing sessions, ready and motivated to think of solutions to some of the world's most challenging issues.

Youth Turn Tables Continuation from Page 1

However, she also noted Nepal's King Gyanendra's manipulative power as an example of an internal force affecting this overarching conflict.

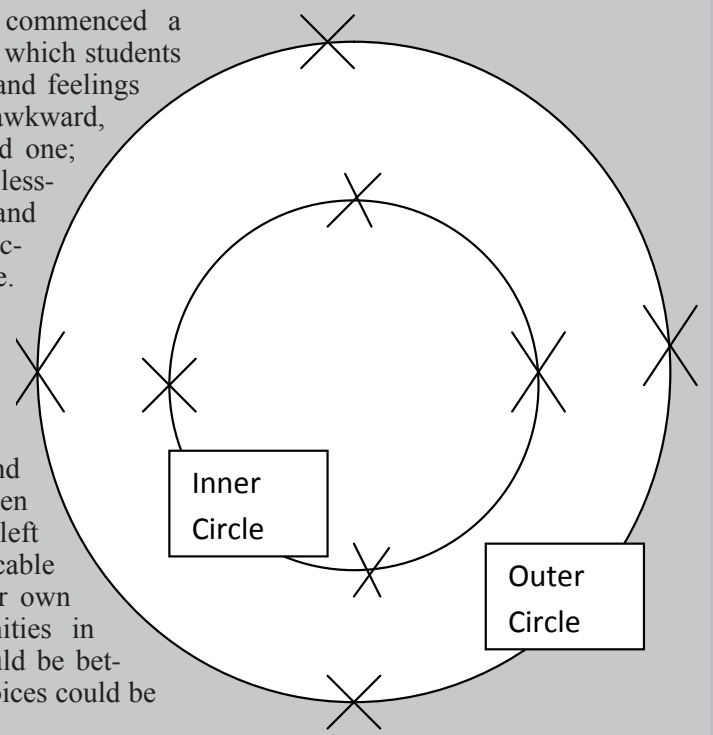
After a brief review of Nepal's current and striving state, Taylor mentioned six principles to constructive conflict: exit strategies, inclusive and participatory, future-oriented, new visions, non-violent and a general process of inquiry. To help further this understanding of "process of inquiry," Taylor introduced an effective leadership technique that would often times be used outside of the briefing; a technique that would provoke voices to be heard, as well as promote the idea of inquiry.

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" alternate seats. It is based on an interactive structure of an outer and inner circle in which active listening takes place and the voices of speakers are heard. Consultants sitting in the inner circle refrain from talking during the first round, while their partners 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 of 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 collective 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 connection within round three. 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

Herminia Ramirez balances her time between making short films about women overcoming struggles and her schooling. She is currently interning with Sun & Moon Vision Productions. As if her internship isn't already enough, Ramirez is studying ethnic and gender inequalities at California State University San Marcos. She is pursuing a double major in women's studies and mathematics.

Sun & Moon Vision Production is a nonprofit organization which focuses on producing "women-made films, documentaries, media art, and events that educate, inspire change and advance a humanitarian vision." Ramirez claims that by doing this, Sun & Moon Vision Production is creating change "by educating and providing working opportunities to the other media artists, especially women and youth, who typically do not have access to, or are under-represented in the fields of film and multimedia technologies."

Ramirez' session at WorldLink's 12th Annual Youth Town Meeting, titled "Take Action! Responding to Gender Inequality in the Media," began with an exercise, which focused on how women are typically portrayed in the media.

Words such as "submissive," "soft spoken," and "sex-appeal" were the first to come up.

Ramirez discussed stereotypes that women must constantly overcome: "slut vs. prude," "uptight vs. submissive," "smart and ugly vs.

video clip which showed how women living in conflict areas are "armed not with a gun but with a voice." She encourages women to rise against the labels that the media places on them, saying that "you just have to be who you are."



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

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 entertaining 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 loathing 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 get the message out. If businesses cannot make a profit on what their advertisements are trying to sell, then she predicts 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.

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

Khamisa 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 stray 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.” If the youth is raised in peace, they will pass peace on to others around them.



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

that someone who was at one time a murderer could gain an education and find the strength and hope to succeed. He will not be eligible for parole until the year 2027, however,

Where Do We Go From Here?

BY MEGAN MURRAY
STAFF WRITER

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** and visiting 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 be-

ing 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 pre-

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. Indeed, 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.



sentation 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 the first step towards such changes is in “coming to grips” with inter-group conflict. He distinguished this kind of conflict from the “constructive conflict” that can lead to better policy and necessary change; the so-called transition from bullets to ballots.

Understanding global conflicts is the first step towards resolving them. As this generation prepares to inherit a world with a 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.

Dándole Vuelta a las Tablas

BY ALELI BALAGUER

STAFF WRITER

¿Como se define un conflicto y cuales son las consecuencias despues de un conflicto? **Laura Taylor**, Ph.D. candidata en la universidad de Notre Dame y presentadora del informe interactivo “Dandole vuelta a las tablas: Conflicto 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. Dentro de 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 desension. Es aquí cuando uno puede llegar a un establecimiento como un trato de paz o una ley. Si el conflicto demuestra ser constructivo, la paz sostenible 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, deconstructivo 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 interna 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 visiones, no-violencia y proceso general de investigación. Para clarificación 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 se sientan en el círculo interno se refrenan de hablar durante el primer turno, mientras que sus socios 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 y sentimientos sobre la actividad: la facilidad de escojer un solo lado de el primer turno; la frustración de el segundo turno; y la conexión 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 esten 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.



Explicando la Religion

BY JOHANA ROJAS

STAFF WRITER

Rabino **Lisa Goldstein**, Ministro Católico de la Jóvenes **Benjamin Lee**, y Monje budista de Kadampa **Gen Kelsang Atisha** vinieron de diversas religiones y formas de vida. Sin embargo, no hablaron sobre estas diferencias en su sesión llamada “Aprendiendo coexistir: Encontrando la unidad entre diferencias religiosas.” Los portavoces compartieron las semejanzas que unen sus creencias y la importancia de la tolerancia. Aunque la religión es a menudo la causa de varias guerras y violencia, los presentadores mantuvieron un tono respetuoso.

Goldstein comenzó compartiendo una explicación básica de la fe judía y de sus orígenes. Ella presentó tres historias tradicionales que han influenciado a la religión judía. Ella comenzó explicando la creación del mundo según lo dicho en el libro de génesis, el primer libro del Torah.

Goldstein explicó la historia en el libro del éxodo que le demuestra a la comunidad judía que hay que “amar al extranjero.” También hizo referencia a la ter-

cera historia del monte Sinaí porque acentúa la importancia de vivir una vida sana.

Ministro Lee compartió los fundamentos de la religión Católica, elaborando que extendió de la tradición judía, con enfoque a la vida

que no hay salvación para otros si no son de la misma fé.

Después de la clarificación de los fundamentos del judaísmo y del Catolicismo, monje Atisha comenzó a hablar sobre los problemas que se presentan cuando la religión se

base de su creencia: amor, paz, y unidad. Atisha continuó, indicando que el problema no son las diferencias religiosas. El problema viene de un grupo que culpa a otro grupo por su sufrimiento y toman venganza hacia ellos. Él aconsejó a los estudiantes de tener cuidado al responder a cualquier acción negativa.

Los tres líderes religiosos vinieron a una conclusión importante que demostró la energía de la inclusión y entendimiento. Demandaron que en vez de luchar diferencias excesivas, todas las religiones pueden unirse con sus semejanzas. En este caso el Judaísmo, el Catolicismo, y el Budhismo se unieron en amor, paz, y trabajo. Con esta unidad, demostraron cómo es que los individuos pueden promover la tolerancia por todas las religiones y encontrar paz juntos. Los estudiantes que atendieron la sesión sa-



de Jesús Cristo quien ellos creen fue el hijo de Dios en forma humana. Él explicó el concepto de la salvación, y le aclaró a los estudiantes que los Católicos no creen necesariamente

utiliza para justificar odio, crimen, y violencia. Lee estuvo de acuerdo con Atisha, indicando que “la guerra no se justifica en nombre de Dios,” porque es una contradicción de la

lieron con un mensaje valioso y uno que nunca podrán olvidar: en vez de usar la fé como arma, la fé se debe utilizar para unir y para tolerar diferencias.

Mas Peligroso Que Una AK-47

BY VANESSA ZARATE
STAFF WRITER

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 World-Link, los estudiantes se enteraron de un peligro mucho más fuerte y menos obvio que esta ocurriendo en la República Democrática del Congo. Esta region tiene una situación tan peligroso que daña más profundo que pistolas.

Jennifer Freeman es una advocadora 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, alemán y estudios europeos de la universidad de Victoria en Canadá.

Freeman describe la guerra en Congo como la "peor y más descuidada guerra del mundo." Freeman sacó una foto que contenía varios artículos incluyendo teléfonos celulares, computadoras, diamantes y joyería hecha de oro. Freeman mencionó que estos

artículos insignificantes, que todos hemos poseído hasta cierto punto, son parte de la causa de la guerra en Congo. Freeman explicó que Congo es uno de los países más ricos con recursos naturales que varios otros países usan para sus mercancías. Freeman indica que esta "abundancia es uno de sus destructores [de Congo]."

La historia de la guerra de Congo es compleja. Comenzó en 1998, y sus raíces se encajan en conflicto del colonialismo y problemas de frontera. La explotación de los minerales y de gente fueron la causa de varios proyectos ambiciosos y violentos, tomando por ejemplo el genocidio en 1994.

Freeman aclaró que el incidente en Rwanda era un "catalizador importante" en la presente guerra de Congo. Según Freeman, la cuenta de muertos en Congo es 5.4 millones, haciéndolo solo segundo a la Segunda Guerra Mundial. Los rebeldes evitan captura ocultándose en colinas. Los aldeanos deben caminar largas distancias para recuperar los recursos necesitados para sobrevivir (e.g. el agua, el alimento, y la madera para fuego.) Mientras los hombres arriesgan la muerte, el riesgo de las

mujeres es más profundo - violación. "El decir que la violación contra mujeres y niñas es algo que afecta a varias, es una subestimación," dice Freeman. Los soldados violan indistintamente; mujeres, adolescentes, niñas, e incluso infantes. Cuál es quizás lo más trágico de estos crímenes es que las mujeres no tienen a nadie para ayuda, 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? Psicologicamente, el enemigo busca la el castigo más 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 vio-

lación como un método de control. El objetivo es dar miedo, porque cuando hay miedo la gente se va. Cuando se evacúan las áreas, las milicias se hacen dueños de todo lo que se dejó. 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 quedarán tranquilos y optimistas sobre la situación de Congo. Hay muchas organizaciones que están ayudando por medio de atención médica para 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 aconseja a los delegados a que, al hacer compras, tomen conciencia y pregunten siempre de "¿donde 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.



Actúa Como Hombre: Cambia de Mentalidad

BY AILEEN PANTOJA
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Robert Buelow, coordinador de prevención para el Departamento Campus de Recursos de Asalto y Educación en la Universidad de California, Irvine, y licenciado de psicología 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 conteniendo 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 americanas que habían sido abusadas físicamente por sus maridos o novios: 31%. El segundo preguntó cuántos estudiantes universitarios de los Estados Unidos experimentarían violación o intento de violación: 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 fue causada

por alguien conocido a la víctima (e.g. familia o amigos): 77%. Las últimas dos preguntas dieron lugar al porcentaje impactante; el 99% de la gente que viola son hombres. Al elaborar más, Buelow explicó que de todas las violaciones cometidas, 99% de ellas son causadas por muchachos o hombres.

La segunda actividad se enfocó en los estereotipos dados a los varones. Buelow le pidió a los estudiantes que le dijeran palabras que describieran a los hombres. Buelow separó al grupo en pares para que cada equipo tuviera una discusión. Al escuchar los términos, Buelow los iba escribiendo dentro de una caja que él había dibujado en el pizarrón. Algunos de los términos

fueron: resistente, sin emociones, fuerte, audaz, construido, apuesto, orgulloso, inteligente, 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 sugirieron 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 sí ha creado la noción de que las mujeres son más débiles que los hombres. Éste 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." Unas 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. Aumentando la educación y levantando conocimiento la manera a una sociedad género-equilibrada está más cercano a accesible.



A Refugee's Story



My name is **Nyuol 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 virtues of the Christian South or to condemn the Muslim North. Nor is it my intention to depict one side—the Arabs or the Africans, 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 insure a future of peace, not bloodshed.

I was born in 1991 during the Second Sudanese Civil War, in Bahr 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 hands tied behind them and soldiers pointing guns at them. I was the youngest in the family and the militiamen expected me out of fear to tell them where my father was hiding. They interrogated me at gunpoint and, when I would not utter a word, I was beaten. To make me talk, the militiamen dug a hole and threw me inside it; and kept beating me—hitting me, kicking me, yelling at me—“where is your rebel father?” I did not dare say a word. I was quivering and sweating in terror—I could feel how fast my heart pounded. Scared and breathless, I looked around me for familiar faces, but I only saw scary, angry faces looking back.

As a last resort, the militiamen fired multiple shots at me but, luckily, I was not hurt. It was only three weeks later, when my father returned from hiding and

promised I'd be safe; that I spoke, played, or slept free of nightmares.

This attack forced my father to send my mother, my siblings, and me north to Khartoum—far from war—where we became internally displaced people, or, to put it simply, refugees in our own country.

As Southerners in Khartoum, we faced oppression and suffered harsh discrimination and segregation, much like African-Americans in the Jim Crow South. We lived in isolated camps in the desert outside Khartoum, without clean water, electricity, security, schools, hospitals, or economic opportunity, which intensified our poverty and increased our mortality rate. My younger sister, who was three years old, died a few months after our arrival in the camp because of lack of food and basic healthcare. In the camp, we lived on one meal a day, which was onion soup with hard, moldy bread cheaply purchased from the bakery. My sister gradually grew thin and then became very sick, and my mother took her to a hospital in the city, but she was not well taken care of because we did not have money. We could do nothing about it. So we watched her die. Many people died like that, especially the children.

Hopelessness is not the absence of hope, but the absence of a chance of finding hope. Those of us who survived poverty and disease suffered from hopelessness, mainly because there was nothing to do. This included children who were denied access to education, the very thing that could bring them hope for improvement and a better future. Our life was a heavy burden we endured. It was Hades. There were no hopes and dreams in the camps, no search for meaning and ideals. Most of us accepted this reality as an inescapable fate.

My mother was one of the few people in the camp who saw our difficult reality as a challenge to be overcome. She believed that there was hope and a brighter future for us if we received an education. She believed that her job as a mother was to ensure that we had a better life. She believed that, with an education, we could overcome obstacles and alter our fate—we could transform our reality. This instilled in me an intense desire to learn. When I was 9 years old, I naively thought that if I had a new school uniform—a white shirt and green pants, a nice schoolbag, a ruler, several pencils and notebooks—any school in Khartoum would accept me. I worked for about four months straight—I swept streets, washed cars, babysat Arab children, sold toy cars I made out of cans—and bought new school uniform and school materials. When I walked into the school nearest to the camps, Arab boys taunted me, calling—baleed, Janubi, abd, stupid, Southerner, slave in Arabic—any-

thing demeaning their mouths could utter. But I could not see or hear 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 new uniform and school books to be accepted in this school. Why could they not accept me? I did not know. I was too young. It would take me more than a year and excruciating 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 by working 12 hours a day, 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 us any schooling. The private schools were expensive and she made only enough money to cover our necessities—food and shelter.

This setback only encouraged my desire to learn. By age ten, unable to read, I had collected a library of about four hundred books, by gathering discarded novels from the trash. I also earned the equivalent of 15 cents a day from 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 Viviana Francis who introduced me to poetry, which became my passion and inspiration. Poetry empowered me.

With my ability to read and write Arabic, every difficulty I experienced—the poverty, oppression, despondency, and the pain of being a refugee—was no longer an inescapable fate, but a challenge to be faced, and an obstacle to be overcome. I read and read and read. Literature deepened my understanding of the conflict and the injustices Southern Sudanese were experiencing. 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 refugees can legally attend government schools 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 racism in Egypt because of our skin color. We were publicly harassed, robbed, insulted and called samara, 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 injustice and degradation—they became accustomed to it and, by tolerating it, they encouraged it.

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

I realized that we refugees never had a deeper sense or understanding 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, wherever we lived, whether in Khartoum or in Egypt, we were subject to humiliation, injustice, intolerance, and degradation. We were always told that we had neither dignity nor liberty, that we had no humanity, that we had no rights, that we were slaves, that we were an inferior race and nothing more. The worst of all is that many refugees truly believed it, accepted it, acted upon it, and saw their lives and the world around them through it.

It was a liberating and empowering 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 Egyptians were racist and violent against us, it was their business. It never was about who Egyptians were; it always was 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 the major philosophers in Arabic. Rousseau, Spinoza, and Kant won my admiration. I wanted to be a human rights attorney. I wanted to make a difference in my country, to bring about a better life for my people, a brighter future for every child. And I needed a good education to make that happen.

In 2005, I took a writing workshop at the American University in Cairo. My teacher, Brooke Comer, encouraged me to apply to her alma mater, Dunn School, a small, coed boarding school in California's Santa Ynez Valley. I won a scholarship to Dunn and flew to California in the fall of 2006. Finally, my dreams of a better life, to study law and become a human rights attorney, to help bring about a brighter future not only for myself but also for the Sudanese people, became a more tangible possibility.

From my journey out of oppression in Sudan and racism in Egypt, I would like you to learn two things. First, nothing destroys us without our consent. The tyrant might usurp our land and abuse our sovereignty, tear our families apart and inflict upon us unimaginable pain, but the tyrant can never touch our dignity or our inner-sovereignty. We alone have jurisdiction over our dignity. Only few refugees understood that—my mother did, and as a result, I'm here today.

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.

You are all so fortunate 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. 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.

Let us, for the sake of humanity and for preservation of human life and dignity, overcome our prejudices and understand our differences.

—**Nyuol Tong**, founder and chair, Self Sudan. To learn more, please visit: www.selfsudan.org.

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 newspaper staff 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 ways on 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 its 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 ready 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 relaying 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 themselves to be superior. 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

Editor-in-Chief: Aileen Pantoja (SCPA)

Reporters and Photographers:

Academy of Our Lady of Peace: Andi Seikaly; Bishops School: Megan Murray; Canyon Crest Academy: Amaruta Trivedi; Cathedral Catholic High School: Clint Ackermann; CETYS: Melissa Depineros; 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: Rachele Aguilera, Sandra Anton, Aleli Balaguer, Celeste Bogle, Latrice Brown, Krystal Decena, David Dixon, Monica Elizondo, Rebecca Knell, Shane Mack, Kathlene Manimtim, Sheree Morales, Cassandra Orrantia, Arielle Pardes, Johana Rojas, Vanessa Zarate

Interns, Volunteers, and Amazingly Wonderful Friends of WordLink

Dee Aker (Program Founder), Karla Alvarez (Program Officer), Ricardo Aguilar, Jay Bartell, Anne Birkel, Stacey Blanchet, Jeanine Boucher-Colbert, Louis Cappella, Isaias Castro, Pamela Cordes, Wayne Cusick, Felipe Espindola, Lauren Galloway, Dean William Headley, Zealan Hoover, Holly Hummel, Nancy Jensen, Tison Kelley, Diana Kutlow, Ben Lee, Erika Lopez, Melissa Lucas, Scott Lundergan, Brian Majeski, Elena McCollim, Mary Monaco, Ana Morales, Emiko Noma, Karen Oropeza, Lee Ann Otto, Sierra Parker, Trang Pham, Jeff Rach, Lily Rodriguez, Patie Rogers, Dustin Sharp, Bill Smith, Nathan Swett, Ali Wolters, and members of the Friendship Force.

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 Charter Leadership Academy, 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

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!



Message to all High School Students!

You have an opportunity to be part of something great this summer! Do you have an interest in global affairs? Do you want to spread your interest to other people your age? If so, apply now to become a summer intern for WorldLink!*

Responsibilities include:

- Gathering materials for the WorldLink Reader, and educational classroom tool
- Reaching out to schools and youth to expand the WorldLink Program
- Participation in events to connect the youth to global affairs
- Assisting in the organization of "Youth Forums"
- Participation in the Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice special events, panel discussions, and film series

Application Deadline:
Friday, May 22nd, 2009 at 5:00 PM

*Required time commitment of 8-10 hours per week

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:



Karla Alvarez
Program Officer
kalvarez@sandiego.edu



12th Annual WorldLink Youth Town Meeting Closing Plenary Speech

SPEECH DELIVERED BY: MILIA FISHER AND ALEC HOWARD, WORLDBLINK INTERNS

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 vicious brutality of global 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 uneducated 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.

Over 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 evils of this world.

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. Elevate your consciousness to a level that truly allows you to understand the problems like those of Usha and her village. Truly see her struggle, truly contemplate her life. And once you do that, once

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

to alleviate global conflict.

By coming to the IPJ and actively participating in this event today, you are making a difference. You are preparing yourself to be able to respond to the global challenges of our generation. Over the past century, the world has been transformed into a closely connected global society. It is more important than ever that people become aware of the age of rapid communication and limitless

thetic. Winston Churchill once stated, "A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty." Leaving here today, remember to be optimistic, and when you return to your schools and families, remind those who could not attend today of the experiences you had. You can do this by creating a club, organizing a Youth Forum of your own, or simply talking about today with your friends. If you are passionate and say, "I want to make a difference," others will listen, and as you spread knowledge, you are spreading the important message of the IPJ, which is to foster peace, cultivate justice, and create a safer world.

On that note, we would like to thank all the wonderful speakers who took the time to share with us their stories and expertise and all the WorldLink donors, especially the Beyster Family Foundation Fund at The San Diego Foundation for the Virtual Classroom Project grant that will enable us to share our discussions with students all over the world. We would also like to thank all of the Youth Town Meeting organizers, including the staff at the Institute for Peace & Justice and WorldLink interns. Finally we thank the students from all over San Diego and Baja Mexico, for coming and committing to share what you have learned with your fellow peers.

Furthermore, last year's theme on Climate Change inspired us to distribute reusable tote bags to the speakers and participants at this year's Youth Town Meeting. You can collect them as you exit the theater in exchange for your completed evaluations.

This is WorldLink's 12th Annual Youth Town Meeting which means we have included over 7,000 students in our 12 years. We hold the Youth Town Meeting each year, at no cost, in order to ensure a diverse group of students. Each year, the Youth Town Meetings include over 25 private, public, and charter schools from San Diego and Baja Mexico to South Korea.

If you believe in this program, please tell your friends and family about it. Included in this tote is a flyer for you to give to your parents and encourage them to give what they can. Even \$5 will make a difference. If you are inspired by what you heard today and are wondering what you can do, help WorldLink. Get involved and make a difference.

To conclude we would like to thank all of you for attending the 12th Annual WorldLink Youth Town Meeting. And on behalf of the IPJ staff and Interns, we wish you the best of luck until we see you again in follow up Youth Forums. We hope that you use the knowledge you have found today to make the world a better place.



part of the 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, California, 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 Dali Lama, Mother Theresa and Usha Naryane and the IPJ, all of whom have worked tirelessly

travel capabilities in which much of the world's population now lives. A sense of global awareness is bound to increase as time progresses. As a high school student, I realize that the prospect of this new age may not seem to be an immediate concern for some. Although the world may now be overshadowed by darkness, with war in the Gaza Strip, genocide in Darfur, and global terrorism at an all time high, you are the leaders of tomorrow and will make a difference.

There is no age limit to social activism. The only requirement is to keep an open and positive frame of mind and to refuse to become apa-

12th Annual WorldLink Briefings and Speakers

BRIEFINGS

A Finding Hope in Adversity: Perspectives from Former Refugees

Presenters: Aiven Al-Ankawi, Iraq; Rawan Blejani, Iraq; Mya Kyi, Burma; Famo Musa, Somalia
Moderators: Sierra Parker (HTHI) and Alix Reichert (OLP)

B Part of the Problem or Part of the Solution? Religion, Conflict and Peacebuilding

Presenters: Lance Nelson, professor, USD; Mary Ellen Jebbia, student, USC's Interfaith Council
Moderator: Mariana Piñera (CETYS)

C Disparity and Solidarity: A Ghanaian's Story of Hunger and Hope

Presenter: Thomas Awiapo, program officer, Catholic Relief Services in Ghana
Moderators: Kathleen Dore (OLP) and Marissa Saldana (EHS)

D Turning the Tables: Youth Transforming Conflict

Presenter: Laura Taylor, Ph.D. candidate, University of Notre Dame
Moderator: Sophia Casillas (ORHS)

E What About Our Rights? Indigenous Peoples, Discrimination and Struggles for Social Justice

Presenter: Robert Hitchcock, chair, Department of Anthropology, Michigan State University
Moderator: Alan Del Callejo (CETYS)

F Take Action! Responding to Gender Inequality in the Media

Presenter: Herminia Ramirez, educational outreach coordinator, Sun & Moon Vision Productions
Moderator: Jennifer Langston (JMHS)

G Learning to Coexist: Finding Unity in Religious Differences

Presenters: Gen Kelsang Atisha, Rabbi Lisa Goldstein and Benjamin Lee
Moderator: Jessica Wilson (LJCD)

H Xenophobia: Cause or Weapon in Sudan's Wars?

Presenter: Judy Bernstein, author, They Poured Fire on Us from the Sky
Moderator: Nancy Muñoz (CETYS)

I The Economics of Political Violence

Presenter: Dipak Gupta, professor, Department of Political Science, SDSU
Moderator: Alec Howard (CCHS)

J Transforming Conflict into Love and Unity through Forgiveness

Presenter: Azim Khamisa, founder, Tariq Khamisa Foundation
Moderators: Rishika Daryanani (HTHI) and Wendy Ortega (CETYS)

K Act Like a Man: Think Outside the Box

Presenter: Robert Buelow, coordinator, Campus Assault Resources and Education Department, UC Irvine
Moderator: Godiva Kincaid (OLP)

L The Challenge of National Identity in Post-Apartheid South Africa

Presenter: Michael Williams, professor, Department of Political Science and International Relations, USD
Moderator: Thania Herrera (CETYS)

M Working in Conflict Zones: The Job of U.S. State Department Diplomats

Presenter: Amy Hyatt, U.S. Department of State Representative
Moderator: Dylan Morales (CHS)

N More Destructive than Death: Why Rape is Replacing the AK-47 as the Weapon of Choice in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Presenter: Jennifer Freeman, former peace writer, Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice
Moderator: Marissa Wong (HTHI)

O Sustainability is Good Business

Presenter: Ben Thomson, vice president of international development, Invisible Children
Moderator: Jay Bartell (HTHI)

Speakers

Aiven Al-Ankawi, 14, is a member of The AjA Project, an after-school participatory 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 awareness about the refugee resettlement experience and facilitate cross-cultural dialogue among refugees and the larger San Diego community.

Gen Kelsang Atisha is the resident teacher of Vajrarupini Kadampa Buddhist Center in San Diego, part of a worldwide network of Buddhist Centers established by Geshe Kelsang Gyatso. Gen Atisha was ordained as a Buddhist monk by Geshe Kelsang and has studied under him since 1999. The name "Atisha," given to him by his Spiritual Guide, means "peace." Having studied and meditated on Buddha's teachings extensively, Gen Atisha has become a qualified meditation teacher, skilled in conveying the ancient teachings of Buddha in the context of contemporary American society.

Kevin Avruch is a visiting scholar at the Joan B. Kroc School of Peace Studies at the University of San Diego and professor of Conflict Resolution and Anthropology in the Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution at George Mason University. He is author or editor of five books, including *Critical Essays on Israeli Society, Religion, and Government and Culture and Conflict Resolution*. Avruch is currently working on projects investigating sources of political violence in protracted conflicts, the role of human rights and truth and reconciliation commissions in post-conflict peacebuilding and cultural aspects of complex humanitarian and peacekeeping operations.

Thomas Awiapo was born in northern Ghana and survived childhood hunger by attending a school where meals were served. Today, he is a senior staff member with Catholic Relief Services (CRS) in Ghana inspiring communities to engage in the fight for ending global poverty. His work with CRS has included organizing meal programs at village schools, training rural leaders for effective advocacy and governance, and promoting solidarity among communities in Ghana, across Africa and in the United States.

Judy Bernstein, while volunteering at the San Diego office of the International Rescue Committee, met three Lost Boys from Sudan on their third day in America. Deeply touched by their tragic childhoods and heroic survival, she befriended the boys and later published *They Poured Fire on Us from the Sky: The True Story of Three Lost Boys of Sudan*.

Rawan Blejani, 19, was born in Iraq. She arrived in San Diego with her family in 2000, after seven months in a refugee camp in Vienna, Austria. Blejani went to El Cajon Valley High School. She graduated from high school in 2007 and is currently attending Grossmont College; her ultimate goal is to become a nurse. She speaks fluent Arabic and English.

Robert Buelow is the violence prevention coordinator for the Campus Assault Resources and Education Department at the University of California, Irvine, where he facilitates workshops and trainings on sexual assault and domestic violence prevention, serves as the advisor of the all-male peer education group CHAMPS and has collaborated with university law enforcement and judicial affairs on a victim-sensitive response initiative for sexual assault reports.

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 psychosocial 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 Lisa L. Goldstein is the executive director of Hillel of San Diego and the campus director at the University of California, San Diego. Recently she has worked as a group leader for service 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 Department of Political Science at San Diego State University. He received master's degrees in Economics from Visva-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 Hassane 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 emphases on development, environmental justice and human rights. Currently, he focuses on genocide and conflict management issues involving indigenous peoples worldwide.

Mary Ellen Jebbia 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 Khamisa, 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 14-year-old gang member. Believing there were "victims at both ends of the gun," he forgave Tony and founded the Tariq Khamisa Foundation (TKF). Committing his life to halting 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 Kyi, 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. Kyi attended Grossmont 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 Joan 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 in Fall 2009.

Famo Musa, 17, has been involved with The AjA Project for three years. As a natural leader in the after-school participatory photography program, Musa was asked to join AjA's Youth Advisory Council, whose members focus on leadership development and advanced photographic studies with guest artists. She has served as a peer instructor to AjA students, a youth ambassador during 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 chair of the department. He received his Ph.D. in Religious Studies from McMaster University. His research focuses on medieval Hindu theology and the relation between religion and environmental activism. Nelson's writings on aspects of South Asian religious and philosophical thought have appeared in books, reference works and scholarly journals in the United States and India, and he is the editor of the work *Purifying the Earthly Body of God: Religion and Ecology in Hindu India*.

Herminia Ramirez attends California State University, San Marcos, where she is the community outreach specialist for the women's center and editor of the center's monthly newsletter which focuses on social justice issues. She is majoring in women's studies and mathematics, with a minor in ethnic studies. Ramirez is an educational outreach volunteer with Sun & Moon Vision Productions, a local organization producing documentaries that educate, inspire and advance a humanitarian vision.

Laura Taylor was born and raised in the Marshall Islands and earned a B.A. in Psychology from Haverford College and an M.A. in Peace and Justice Studies from the University of San Diego. She has served as director of development at the Guatemala Human Rights Commission and project coordinator for Puentes de Paz in Guatemala, as well as senior program officer at the Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice. She is currently pursuing a dual Ph.D. in Psychology and Peace Studies at the University of Notre Dame.

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.

Michael Williams teaches African politics, comparative politics, American politics and urban politics at the University of San Diego. He received his B.A. from the University of San Diego, his J.D. from the Washington College of Law at American University and his Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Williams is the faculty advisor for the Model United Nations program and the Pi Sigma Alpha honor society. He is publishing a book in November 2009 entitled *The Chieftaincy, the State, and Democracy: The Struggle for Political Legitimacy in Post-Apartheid South Africa*, and has had numerous articles published on South African politics.



Student Kudos

"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'd 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 accentuated 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."



JOAN B. KROC INSTITUTE FOR PEACE & JUSTICE
 UNIVERSITY OF SAN DIEGO
 Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice
 Joan B. Kroc School of Peace Studies
 University of San Diego
 5998 Alcalá Park
 San Diego, CA 92110-2492
<http://peace.sandiego.edu>