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## Dialogues of the Heart

Jamal Rahman

From childhood I have delighted in reflecting on Quranic verses, including one that particularly spoke to me in the years that our family traveled from place to place on my father's diplomatic assignments. "Allah has spread out the earth as a carpet for you," says the Quran, "so you may walk therein on spacious paths" (55:26).

Growing up in countries of the Middle East, Europe and North Africa, I soon realized that in fact we do not walk on spacious paths. I was acutely aware of the anguish, anger and violence in the Arab-Israeli conflict, the sectarian hostilities between Catholics and Protestants in Ireland, and the fierce hostility between Hutus and Tutsis in Rwanda.

From my parents I heard tragic stories of communal killings in India between Hindus and Muslims during the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947. In that massacre, over a million people died. In my lifetime, Pakistan broke up into two nation-states of Pakistan and Bangladesh in 1971. Muslims killed Muslims along ethnic lines. Again, over a

million people died.

The world, I realized, is fragmented by narrow political boundaries within existing class divisions, ethnic and racial prejudices, religious conflicts and political rivalries. Too often, these differences erupt in violence and, at times, into horrific massacres.

Today, as a new U.S. citizen, I am struck by the polarization between red and blue states, between progressives and neo-conservatives in religion and politics. As I write, the barrage of news about violence in Iraq and Afghanistan is mind-boggling.

### A Blinded Heart

The Quran says that when there is chronic fear, anger and hatred, "It is not that his eyes have become blind, but his heart has become blind." (Qur'an 22:46) In an environment of fear and anger,

the heart clenches and becomes blinded. A central spiritual truth embodied in every tradition says that only that which comes from the heart can touch and open another heart. The Bud-

dha said, "Hate never yet dispelled hate. Only love dispels hate."

The 15<sup>th</sup> century Indian mystic

Kabir offers sage advice: "Do what is right but never leave the person's being out of your heart." Protect yourself. Don't allow yourself to be abused. Do what is right. If you are angry, know that you are fighting the antagonism, not the antagonist. We are asked to discern between behavior and being. This discernment, Kabir insists, has the power to shift heaven and earth.

We are asked to do our inner work on an abiding basis: integrating the scattered fragments of our ego so that we can create inner spaciousness. From this wellspring of spaciousness will arise ways of thinking, being and doing that are integrated, whole and compassionate.

This inner work is essential. Listen to the words of Alexander Solzhenitsyn: "If it were all so simple! If only there were evil people somewhere insidiously committing evil deeds and it were necessary to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them. But the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being. And who is willing to destroy a piece of his own heart?"

In conferences and retreats I attend, I marvel at the growing consciousness of political activists. I was especially moved by the story of an African American

*...when there is chronic fear, anger and hatred, "It is not that his eyes have become blind, but his heart has become blind."*

activist. As a young child, he slapped a white child who called him “nigger.” At home, his father congratulated him but his mother tenderly chided him, saying, “What good did that do?” She continued, “Son, there has to be a better way.” Her words splashed in the child’s soul. He has dedicated his life to finding a better way. He combines political action with the continuous sacred work of becoming a genuine, compassionate and inclusive human being.

### Bee and Wasp

Throughout the course of human history, religion has been exploited to incite passions and justify violence. In the name of religion, humans perpetrate the most terrible brutalities on each other.

It is necessary to acknowledge that every religion has verses of awkwardness that, if read in isolation and out of context, can be exploited to rationalize demonization and domination of the other.

The basic truth is that notwithstanding awkward and difficult verses, all religions of the world have at their core the teachings of love, compassion, justice and inter-connection with the other. They speak an inclusive and universal message. Here are three quotes from the Abrahamic faiths:

“It has been told thee, humankind, what is good, and what the Eternal asks of you: only to do justly, to love mercifully and to walk with integrity in the Presence of your Lord” (Micah 6:8).

“Love your neighbor as your-

self” (Leviticus 19:18, Mathew 19:19).

“Repel evil with something better so that he with whom you have enmity, becomes your bosom friend” (Quran 41:34).

Which verses of the holy books we select and how we interpret them depends on our intention. The 13<sup>th</sup> century sage Rumi says: “A bee and a wasp drink from the same flower. One produces nectar, the other, a sting.” The sad truth about defense of one’s religion is that we shall debate others over the truth of our Tradition, fight for it, even kill for it. We shall do everything but live our Faith.

### Two Models

In the work of creating harmony and understanding among religions, there are two helpful models: the model of dialogue and the model of Gandhian insights. Both models have three parts to them.

In the first model there is dialogue of the head and dialogue of the heart. In the former we seek commonalities among religions while not glossing over differences. The differences we view

not as errors but as points of distinction. In dialogue of the heart we experience the practices and worship services of other traditions and allow them to deepen and enrich our own spiritual practices.

The dialogue of the head and heart organically lead to dialogue of the hands: joining together, regardless of theological differences, we work on joint projects to help the poor and protect the environment.

In Gandhi’s model there are three imperatives. First, it is the sacred duty of every individual to have an appreciative understanding of other religions. Second, we must recognize that every religion has truths and untruths, especially our own! Third, if an extremist commits violence, let us not criticize that person’s religion. Rather, we should point out insights and verses of beauty from this person’s own tradition and help him or her become a better Muslim, Christian, Jew or Hindu.

### Getting to Know One Another

It is most heartening to know that the urgency and desperation of our times have motivated people at the grass roots level to realize, as the saying goes, that we are the ones we have been waiting for. People are taking the lead and not waiting for governments, authorities or experts to lead them.

I recently returned from a trip to Israel accompanied by a rabbi and a Christian pastor. There we were heartened to see, in the midst of gloom and despair, a large number of peace projects between Israelis and Palestinians who have boldly taken the lead in the face of daunting difficulties. We believe that it is these simple projects of peace, rather than international policies, that will really make a difference. Little by little, these acorns of peace will take root and flourish into oak trees of justice and mutual well-being.

In my own ministry, I work closely with Rabbi Ted Falcon and Pastor Don Mackenzie. Through our friendship and collaborative work, which includes joint workshops and retreat, writing a book

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# Building Bridges: Transcending Enemy-Images

Jiva Manske

Entering the tense little classroom, I joined the students seated on the floor. As part of a school that incorporates the principles of Nonviolent Commu-



Staying aware of what was alive for the girl who had started, I slowed the process down so that everyone could hear the boy's fear around losing the sense of belonging he shared with his best friend. As his tears flowed, we all listened to his needs for connection, support, and empathy that were met by this friendship. After a few minutes, I asked the boy if he was ready to hear the girl's needs for emotional safety and

circle, all the children were outside again, finishing their lunches and playing together.

I continue to be amazed by the willingness of these kids, between the ages of five and 11, to be vulnerable, open, and present with each other in the face of conflict. By the time many of us reach adulthood, we have allowed this willingness to connect across differences to be swept away by the stories we create. Between opposing groups, the labels we use tend to dehumanize the "other," blocking compassion and burying the roots of conflict deep beneath layer after layer of blame, criticism, and bloodshed.

Nonviolent Communication



Jiva Manske is a teacher at the TEMBA School in Mt. Shasta, CA, and is the editor of the newsletter for The Center for Nonviolent Communication.

nication (NVC), I had been asked to help facilitate a "circle" called to address a conflict within the group. As one of the girls began to talk about being called names by the two boys seated across from her, one of the boys cried out, "She just wants to make sure we aren't allowed to play together anymore!"

community. He quietly reflected this back to her. With everyone's needs on the table, each of the children made a request that was fulfilled in the moment. Within five minutes of beginning the

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training gives us the tools to  
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## THE NONVIOLENT COMMUNICATION PROCESS

- I invite you to think of a person in your life with whom you've had conflict. What do you think of him or her? What are you telling yourself about what kind of person he or she is?
- Now think of one thing this person said or did that was difficult for you to experience. Remember exactly what happened, as if a camera had picked up the pictures and sounds.
- Notice how you feel right now. Staying with that feeling, connect with what is most important to you in this moment. Perhaps you have a need for respect, for autonomy, for trust, for wellbeing, or for meaning in your life...?
- Check to see if what you've sensed is something every person on the planet needs. Try to guess what needs might have been alive in the other person.
- Focusing on all these needs, formulate a request of the other person, or of yourself, that would make life more wonderful—something that can be done in the present moment. Be as clear and concrete as possible.
- Notice how you feel when you think about this situation now. Can you imagine entering into a dialogue with the other person with the intention to connect, rather than intending to get your way?

*Nonviolent Communication was founded by Marshall Rosenberg, who has devoted his life to helping some of the world's most bitter enemies drop their weapons and start talking. [www.cnvc.org](http://www.cnvc.org)*

# Combatants for Peace: Palestinians and Israelis Together

The “Combatants for Peace” movement was started jointly by Palestinians and Israelis who previously were active in the cycle of violence. Today they cooperate, sharing a series of important joint commitments:

- We no longer believe that the conflict can be resolved through violence.
- We believe that the bloodshed will not end unless we act together to terminate the occupation and stop all forms of violence.
- We call for the establishment of a Palestinian State, alongside the State of Israel. The two states can exist in peace and security beside each other.
- We will use only non-violent means to achieve our goals and call for both societies to end violence.

*Chen Alon, a major who served in the Israeli army for many years, is now working for a nonviolent solution.*

I am a Major in the armored corps and was recruited for the IDF at the very beginning of the first Intifada. I feel emotional now because although I spoke many times in the past of my experiences from the time of serving in the occupied territories, I have never spoken about it in front of Palestinians until today, especially not ones that I may have

even fired at.

I would like to briefly describe to you the process that I went through—from being a young Zionist Israeli, raised in a normal home and encouraged to become

daughter.

While looking at these young Palestinian girls on the embankment which blocked the village, I was speaking to my wife on the telephone. She was troubled, tell-



*Wail Salamah (right) at a recent Combatants for Peace meeting*

a combatant and an officer, to who I am today. It is important for me to tell my story because I believe that it is a key to the success of this group.

In 1987-1988, when I began chasing Palestinians, perhaps even one of you, who were throwing stones at us in the refugee camps, I was told, and also told my soldiers, that we were protecting the State of Israel. In 2001, on my last night in the occupied territories,

I demolished a house not far from here, in El Chader. Later on during the same day, we initiated a curfew over the village of Husan and I could see Arab girls in the village, which

ing me that no one could bring our daughter Tamar home from kindergarten, and that she was seeking a solution. The memory of my daughter and the reality of the routine and the simple daily problems had shaken me.

I guess I was brought up with paranoia, thinking that everyone is out to get us. At the age of 32, after seeing the Palestinian girls on the embankment in the village which I closed off, and after demolishing a house the previous night, it hit me profoundly that these girls are no different from my own daughter. It was then that I decided that I could no longer take part in this situation, no matter what price I would have to pay.

I believe that our voice can make a difference in our societies. I hope that we may be able to turn all those incidents in which we crossed the lines and carried out forbidden actions into means for finally ending the

*We engaged in dialogue despite the military orders forbidding guards to speak with the prisoners. What I came to realize is that both sides had been packed with false “facts.”*

had in fact become essentially a jail—girls the same age as my own

occupation before it ends our societies and leads to their total collapse. I would like to act upon my realization, and translate it into action together with representatives from the other side.

*Wail Salamah, a Palestinian, fought on behalf of the Fatah movement. After spending five years in prison, he joined Combatants for Peace.*

I'm from Anata, a village north-east of Jerusalem. I'm married and I have six children—four daughters and two sons. As any Palestinian living under the Israeli occupation, I grew up with it and suffered from it. I was arrested in 1973 without any reason and after a few years, a large area of my family's land was taken by the Israeli authorities. They built a military camp on it, which is still there.

I felt it was necessary for me to find a way to resist the occupation. I joined the Fatah movement in 1980, choosing this group because I thought it was the most effective military campaign against the occupation. I continued to witness houses being destroyed and Palestinians being arrested by the thousands.

In 1990, after the death of a group of Palestinian workers from Gaza, I was chosen to carry out an attack against a government

building. That was the plan, but fortunately it did not work. I was arrested, and spent almost five years in prison.

It was in prison that I had the opportunity to read and educate myself. I read books connected

*Through these conversations, I saw the power of dialogue and its ability to bridge differences.*

to the Palestinian cause and the struggle against the Israeli occupation.

What amazed me was that the guards of the prison had been taught another history altogether.

We engaged in dialogue despite the military orders forbidding guards to speak with the prisoners. What I came to realize is that both

sides had been packed with false "facts."

We talked about many things—the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the history of the Jews, the Nazi Holocaust and more. Through these conversations, I saw the power of dialogue and its ability to bridge differences. Later, after I was released, I heard about Israeli soldiers refusing to serve in the occupied Palestinian territories, and meeting in secret with Palestinians. Previously, the only Israeli soldiers I had known stood at checkpoints and demolished homes or arrested people. To sit

down and talk to them and to have things agreed upon with them, this was unbelievable!

I participated in a meeting with some of these soldiers, listening in amazement. What I heard was Israeli soldiers talking

about termination of the Israeli occupation, the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital, alongside the state of Israel, and

all that in non-violent ways. This new approach made me realize that the killings on both sides only produced more murder, that the blood brought more blood and that this spiral must stop.

Although we appear to be just a few, we are conducting important work. It is necessary to open channels of discussion and dialogue with the Israeli society. We wish to promote change through grassroots activity in the two societies, finding ways to resolve the situation through education, political advocacy and popular pressure on the leadership, so that they, too, will wish for peace and work for it in accordance with the international resolutions concerning the Arab-Israeli conflict. ~



*Combatants for Peace Logo*

### Reflection Questions

1. How does this story call me to consider risking a conversation with someone with whom I am in conflict?
2. How might I be a catalyst for a new movement or process for peace? What first step do I want to take toward this process?



Meenakshi Chakraverti is an Indian American who was brought up Hindu. She is Deputy Director for International and Science Programs at the Public Conversations Project.



Mahvash Hassan is a Pakistani American who was brought up Muslim. She is Program Consultant for the Public Conversations Project.

## Dialogue Across Profound Divides

Meenakshi Chakraverti & Mahvash Hassan

### Public Conversations Project: Background and Approach

The Public Conversations Project (PCP) was founded in 1989. The fierce debates on public issues in the 1980s seemed to mirror patterns often found in dysfunctional families—repetitive accusations, little effective listening, and no genuine inquiry. PCP’s founders embarked on an experiment to apply the processes for inviting conversations being used in family contexts to discussions of controversial public issues. Eighteen years later, PCP’s approach to dialogue has been used in communities across the United States and the world.

PCP uses preparation, collaboration, and inquiry to clarify participant purposes for a conversation. The aim is to develop a process in which participants can speak about what lies at the heart of the matter for them, to “listen for what they do not understand, rather than what they disagree with,” and to inquire rather than rebut. It encourages participants to reflect on their individual stories and how these stories shape their worldviews. We hear the hopes and concerns of participants in preparatory interviews. These pre-dialogue conversations begin a process of deep listening and inquiry and help us design the dialogue and prepare ourselves. We emphasize

*We were there to reflect on our own faith and upbringing, share our unique stories, and begin to strip away stereotypes passed down to us through our families, communities and the media.*

inquiry as a framework and practice, always asking ourselves, “Will this question continue the “old” (polarized and/or stuck) conversation, or will it invite open speaking, listening, and further inquiry?”

PCP dialogues are usually for groups of six to twelve people, with one or more sessions of about three hours each. Some groups have met over years and others for only one session. While we do not place an emphasis on reaching agreement or taking joint action, these are outcomes that participants often find more within reach than before the dialogue.

**Hindu-Muslim Women’s Dialogue**

South Asians for Harmony and Reconciliation (SAHR)<sup>1</sup>, an organization of women founded in Boston in 2001, focused on addressing conflict and human rights issues in South Asia with dialogue and listening, rather than accusation and counter-accusation. SAHR organized a South Asian Hindu-Muslim women’s dia-

### Hindu-Muslim Women’s Dialogue

logue, providing a safe space for a genuine conversation about religion.

For four weeks, a small group of South Asian women gathered over tea and samosas in the cramped room of a public

library in a suburban Massachusetts town.

*We were from Pakistan and India. We were Hindu and Muslim. We were there to reflect on our*

*own faith and upbringing, share our unique stories, and begin to strip away stereotypes passed down to us through our families, communities and the media.*

—Mahvash, dialogue co-facilitator

The participants in this dialogue represented a spectrum of religious practice and observance. While these women had lived, worked and studied alongside people from the other faith, this was the first opportunity that most of the participants had had to engage in a candid conversation with the “other.”

*I was apprehensive about the dialogue, but found myself moved and relieved that we could ask difficult questions and receive answers that we could hear. A major issue for Hindus is our sense that our polytheism is misunderstood and disrespected by believers of monotheistic religions. While we did not plumb the depths of this difficult question, we began to answer it in ways that opened the possibility for further discussion.*

—Meenakshi, dialogue participant

### Palestinian and Israeli Dialogue

Soon after these SAHR dialogues, two PCP practitioners collaborated with others on a two day workshop for 5 Palestinian and 5 Israeli journalists. This was a couple of years after the second “Intifada” had begun and people on both sides were dubious about the process and distrustful of the intentions of participants on the “other” side. We began by asking participants what brought them to be journalists working in their home areas. As each participant spoke about personal experiences, we found first resistance, then

curiosity; as common dilemmas surfaced, empathy gradually began to emerge.

While there was very little new information, many participants heard the “old information” in new ways. One Israeli spoke about a post-Holocaust refugee parent who had found a home in Israel that led this participant to have a deep personal commitment and loyalty to Israel. This was not a new story, but the personal terms in which the story was told elicited visible respect and honor from the others in the group, leading to a deepening of subsequent speaking and listening. A Palestinian spoke about an experience in which his family (including a small child) was harassed by Israeli soldiers. While this, again, was not a unique event, within the context of purposeful dialogue the simplicity and feeling of the story allowed participants to listen without defensiveness.

Although we did not track out-

comes of this dialogue, we did hear that some participants drew on each other professionally in ways they might not otherwise have. Our hope is that the understanding and beginnings of relationships that emerged will continue, and will serve to support possibilities for peace.

### Conclusion

The deliberate practice of dialogue can be a simple but powerful way to slow down and recognize anew the personhood and the humanity of others; the complexity of their experience and worldviews; and the vulnerability, tenderness and passion of their feelings, loyalties, and relationships. A few simple ways to explore the power of dialogue include:

- Just listen, silently, for a little longer than you might otherwise and if you feel internally pressed to counter, ask yourself—what am I not hearing

that this person wants me to hear?

- Experiment with speaking about what is most important to you, without focusing on proving the other person wrong.
- Ask a genuine question about what you are hearing (to which you do not know the answer) when you feel tempted to argue and persuade. ~

<sup>1</sup> Sahr means “dawn” in Urdu, the language of Pakistan and parts of North India.

### Reflection Questions

1. As I read *A Matter of Spirit* (AMOS), what processes for seeking common ground do I desire to pursue and with whom?
2. Who might I gather for an evening of dialogue and discussion on seeking common ground using this issue of AMOS?

AMOS is available for download at [www.ipjc.org/journal](http://www.ipjc.org/journal)

## Reconciliation and Common Ground

Billie Ann Davis

*“Humankind has not woven the web of life. We are but one thread within it. Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves. All things are bound together. All things connect.”*

—Chief Sealth

Reconciliation and common ground are inextricably linked. The interrelationship between the two is as fundamental as the linkages among the reconciling elements of grace, confession, contrition, forgiveness, love, and conversion—all working in tan-

dem to get us back to a place of congruence and harmony.

Reconciliation is the act of acknowledging and coming to terms with what has happened, and being open to getting back into alignment. By the time reconciliation is reached, we have also arrived at common ground, the place theologian Paul Tillich referred to as “the ground of our being,” the place where we can be transformed and renewed. I once heard *common ground* described as the place where we have let go of outer stuff and made room for God-stuff. In this place, we can

hear the voice of God and each other. Common ground is where the sacred in me salutes the sacred in you.

There are three areas of reconciliation that are of particular interest to me: the personal, the interpersonal, and the systemic. *Reconciliation at the personal dimension* is about the process of coming to terms with an incident that profoundly affected an individual. It addresses the core issue of how one reaches his or her emotional common ground. *Reconciliation between and among people* deals with people coming to



Billie Ann Davis, Ed.D. writes about the topic of racial reconciliation. Her book, *Reconciling the Race Account*, will be published by Bennett and Hastings Publishing in the fall of 2007.

terms with what happened after being wounded by or perpetuating wrongdoings against others. *Reconciliation of systems* is about

addition to the personal satisfaction for work that he loved, Wilton said: “I knew that I was loved, and a conduit for love. This

Ho’oponopono, used mostly by Native Hawaiian families. This model shows not only how reconciliation is reached in families and communities but also how common ground is intentionally established by taking out blame and making it so that *everyone* present confesses something about what happened, apologizes for it, and forgives.

*In this model, there is more emphasis on correcting the wrong than on any one person who may have committed it.*

In this model, there is more emphasis on correcting the wrong than on any one person who may have committed it.

bringing systems into alignment so that there is more equity and fairness for all people served by the system.

knowledge took me to a place of peace within myself.”

I’m always curious about the process of people plowing through fields of anger, bitterness, guilt, shame, remorse, sadness, and a host of other feelings before reaching reconciliation. A story comes to mind about a political prisoner in South Africa, who went to the ground of his being and was reconciled during apartheid.

When reconciliation occurs between and among people, most likely the elements of confession,

Reconciliation of systems is a

#### HO’OPONOPONO RECONCILIATION MODEL—SEVEN STEPS

1. Everyone agrees to show up.
2. The process begins with prayer, including a supplication for sincerity, truthfulness, and divine guidance.
3. Introspection follows, then identification of the problem. Everyone identifies the hurts they have experienced as a result of the conflict and these are discussed.
4. There is a cycle of sincere confession and apologies by everyone before the cycle of forgiveness for everyone. Appropriate restitution is established and release continues until conflicts and hurts have been released and there is a mutual, reciprocal agreement.
5. Closing includes the reaffirmation of the kinship, a re-bonding with each other, and a commitment to release the conflict.
6. A final closing prayer is said.
7. There is a celebration and sharing of a meal that includes a dish from everyone present.

natural follow-up to the other two areas. Sometimes it is the reconciling of systems that provides the impetus for further changing hearts and minds. In the United States, the decision rendered in the *Brown v Board of Education* case was an attempt to reconcile an educational system that was discriminatory and fraught with inequity. By reconciling the system, many Americans received not only the promise of better schools, but also the opportunity to know each other in ways that were not previously possible. We began coming to terms with unexamined biases while finding the common ground upon which we stand.

One day during his time of prayer and reflection, Wilton said that he had an epiphany that led him to believe the extreme bitterness he felt was not in his best interest. Rather, the thought “from nowhere,” as he described it (what I call grace in action) encouraged him to focus on using his time in prison constructively. Wilton acted on the thought. He got permission to grow flowers, and immediately began putting all his energy into this work. For the first time in many years, he worked with and from great love.

apology, forgiveness, and conversion are involved. The process of reconciliation can be short or long, depending on what and who is involved. There are seven steps in the reconciliation model,

Reconciliation at all three levels—personal, interpersonal, and systemic—is critical to creating social structures built on equality and justice and reflecting the common ground of our humanity. ~

When the flowers bloomed, he began sending bouquets home with his wardens for their wives. One day he received a letter from one of the wives thanking him for the beautiful flowers. She said it was the first time her husband had ever brought her flowers, adding, “I thank you for giving him another way of showing love for me.” In

*“Bridges” continued from page 3*  
transform these “enemy-images” so that people can see each other’s humanness. Practicing empathic listening to hear the underlying needs alive in others cultivates compassion. These needs—ranging from air, water, and food, to love, peace, contribution, and beyond—are our universal means of sustaining and enriching life. Awareness of one’s own needs also cultivates creativity so that honest expression can

contribute to making life more wonderful for everyone. Even in groups with a long history of violence, nurturing consciousness of what is alive in the present moment deepens connections that can transcend labels passed across generations. Transforming enemy-images is a vital step toward resolving conflict before it leads

*...building bridges of connection through compassionate giving and receiving can lead us toward a world where everyone’s needs are addressed peacefully.*

to violence, enabling connection without attachment to getting our way.

Holding this intention to connect leads to strategies for meeting everyone’s needs. Using the skills developed through NVC practice, we often find that once every-

one’s needs are heard, resolution is just 20 minutes away. Around the world, this has been as true for individuals as it has been for warring groups. I recently heard a story of NVC being applied

in mediating between two Nigerian tribes who had been killing each other’s people over disputed resources. Among those in the room were people who knew that someone sitting across the table had killed their children. It was not surprising, then, that when asked what needs were alive, the group immediately responded

with, “They’re murderers!” and “They’re trying to dominate us!”

Guiding each side away from their enemy-images of each other, the process of NVC focused on translating needs for safety, security, and equality. Slowing down the expression and supporting people to create connection before trying to change each other steadily sapped the tension from the room. Amidst the growing calm, one man stood and said, “I know we have a long way to go still. And I also know that if we knew how to communicate this way, we wouldn’t have to kill each other.”

He, like thousands around the world from classrooms to war zones, had discovered that building bridges of connection through compassionate giving and receiving can lead us toward a world where everyone’s needs are addressed peacefully. ~

(Editorial note: To locate a training or workshop in your area nationwide, visit The Center for Nonviolent Communication: [www.cnvc.org/training\\_list.aspx](http://www.cnvc.org/training_list.aspx))

*“Dialogues” continued from page 2*  
together, and a weekly interfaith talk radio show, my life has become enriched and ennobled. As I open myself to learning from the wisdom and beauty of Judaism and Christianity, I find that my Islamic roots are growing deeper and I gain a deeper insight into the verses of the Quran. My interfaith work is making me a better Muslim. I can truly say that interfaith dialogue is not about conversion, it is about completion of our understanding

*...peacemaking is the art of perceiving that things that appear to be apart are one.*

of the broader picture.

In the Quran, God says He could have made all of us into one single community but chose

instead to make us into nations and tribes with different languages, colors, prophets and Books so that we “might get to know one another.” When we sincerely strive to get to know one

another on a heart level without any agenda on our part, we are fulfilling God’s sacred purpose for creating diversity on earth.

A wise elder once said that peacemaking is the art of perceiving that things that appear to be apart are one. It is the art of restoring love and compassion to a relationship that has been torn apart because of fear and hatred.

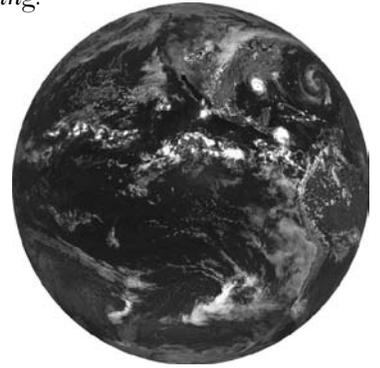
Public peacemaking is what we do. Private peacemaking is the work we do on ourselves. The two are inseparable. ~



## IPJC Hosts David Korten

Hundreds gathered to hear David Korten on the topic of *The Great Turning: From Empire to Earth Community*, the title of his most recent book.

Korten's inspiration and the response of the crowd led IPJC to form two community discussion groups that met for a series of weeks to discuss the book and envision ways to promote a healthy Earth Community.



If you missed the event or discussions, it is not too late to form your own discussion group using the book and discussion guide. Download the guide at: [www.thegreatturning.net/Books.php](http://www.thegreatturning.net/Books.php)

## NWCRI to Shareholders: We Have the Power to Change the World

Every year there are hundreds of shareholder proposals on social and environmental issues that give shareholders the opportunity to stand up for their values with the companies that they own in their portfolios. Yet many shareholders recycle their proxies thinking that the issues are complicated and one vote won't make a difference. Margaret Mead disagrees and says that we should *"Never underestimate the power of a small group of committed people to change the world. In fact, it is the only thing that ever has."*

Today most people agree that global warming is a critical issue for our planet and that each of us has a responsibility to take action to protect the Earth—change a light bulb, plant a tree, buy a hybrid car, vote your proxy.

**The first** shareholder proposal on global warming was filed in **1991** and received little support. **This year** shareholders filed over **40 proposals** on global warming issues, including greenhouse gas emissions, carbon disclosure, and renewable energy. Shareholders are also involved in 50 dialogues with companies in the auto, utility, oil and gas, building and finance sectors.

**Did you know?—NWCRI members** are among a **coalition of 40 shareholders** holding almost \$100 million in **ExxonMobil** stock who filed a resolution requesting the company to "adopt quantitative goals, based on current technologies, for reducing total greenhouse gas emissions from the Company's products and operations."



Now is the time for shareholders to vote their proxies, knowing that they have the power to change the world.

## Parenting for Peace & Justice In Wenatchee, WA

**Ten families from St. Joseph Parish, Wenatchee** found the time spent together to be meaningful and enjoyed the variety of topics presented. Though we altered some of the materials to work within our own constraints, the program is easy to follow, well organized, comprehensive, and offers a thoughtful presentation of a specific topic. Our group found that we especially benefited in two ways. First, we appreciated the time to share thoughts and ideas about issues important in our parenting process. Consequently, **we formed a greater sense of community in the parish.**



Some of the members in our group did not know each other, and this program allowed a greater connection within our large parish, and this is such a positive and important step towards building community within the church. **Our group was left wanting more, and is definitely interested in further offerings.** We thank IPJC for sharing this program with our parish and we look forward to doing more in the future!

—In peace,  
Brigid Chvilicek & Susan Ballinger, facilitators

# peace & justice center

## 2007 Catholic Advocacy Day Produces Results!



Above: Sen. Darlene Fairley (foreground), 32nd Dist.

Above: Gov. Christine Gregoire addresses participants

Top Center: Sen. Mike Carrell, 28th Dist.

Bottom Center: Sen. Jim Honeyford (far right) and Rep. Dan Newhouse (second from right), 15th Dist.



Secures health care for all children  
Allows more people into the Basic Health Plan

Helps offenders transition back into society

Assists local governments create affordable housing

Bans toxic flame retardants

Creates a more just State of Washington!

## Young Adult Justice Book Group: Finding Common Ground

*The Audacity of Hope*, by Barack Obama inspired our group to create a community connection with young adults holding different social and religious perspectives. We networked with a group from Mars Hill Church (Evangelical Christian Bible focused Church). In a marketplace of ideas the groups strove to evade debate and seek common ground on several issues. The group dialogue focused the most attention on the environment. A wide political spectrum was represented from “big government” to “hands-off government.” We exchanged teachings and traditions from our religious backgrounds and all agreed some regulation/intervention is necessary to help our country and the rest of the world be good stewards of the Earth. As our conversation progressed we **overcame stereotypes** and built a foundation of common ground that will nurture current grassroots efforts and future interactions.

## Women’s Justice Circle Round-up

From education to immigration to housing, the women in the Justice Circles are taking a stand on issues that affect low-income women and are working for change in their communities. Spring Circles were held in Yakima (2), Monroe, Seattle (3), Burien and Mount Vernon.

Join a summer Circle—call 206.223.1138  
English—Seattle (Noel House)  
Spanish—Shelton

# Seeking Common Ground

## Understanding Process vs. Conventional Discussion Purpose:

- Improve public conversations about controversial issues
- Build community
- Creative approach to problems and issues
- Provide for group work and an interpersonal communication process

	Understanding Process	Conventional Discussion
<b>Premise</b>	Assumes multiple valid perspectives	Leading toward one right answer
<b>Goal</b>	Understanding another person or group from their point of view	Discussion or debate to convince, win, be right or find the right answer
<b>Attitude &amp; Focus</b>	Openness and curiosity and a focus on what's new, what can I learn	Critical and evaluative; a focus on agree or disagree, right or wrong
<b>Communication &amp; Behaviors</b>	Listening and asking questions and advocating a point of view by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⌘ Listening to understand</li> <li>⌘ Discerning about what is said</li> <li>⌘ Acknowledging your feelings or response without allowing them to undermine; staying present to the conversation</li> <li>⌘ Questions for deeper understanding</li> <li>⌘ Advocating by speaking your truth in an open way</li> <li>⌘ Critical thinking is supported by investigating ideas from different view points and exploring assumptions</li> </ul>	Listening and asking questions and advocating a point of view by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⌘ Waiting to talk</li> <li>⌘ Judging what is said</li> <li>⌘ Adding additional energy to your response and experiencing your stomach tighten, perhaps anger fuels your thoughts</li> <li>⌘ Questions that are interrogating</li> <li>⌘ Advocating by putting down or attacking</li> <li>⌘ Critical thinking moves into criticism and judgment</li> </ul>

### A Caution about how Conventional Discussion can be disguised as the Understanding Process

- Arguing so politely and gently it almost seems like understanding
- After starting with dialogue in which people reveal their feelings; playing 'Gotcha'
- Asking critical, judgmental questions using seemingly sensitive language—"Help me to understand how you arrived at such an uninformed opinion"

—Deborah Flick *From Debate to Dialogue: Using the Understanding Process to Transform Our Conversations*, Orchid Publications, 1998.

*A Matter of Spirit* is a publication of the Intercommunity Peace & Justice Center

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