

Plowshares Institute Fall 2002 Newsletter

Catalyst for Peace and Justice

By Bob Evans, Executive Director

A caricature hangs on my office wall portraying me--representing Plowshares--as a chemist. This humorous portrait was lovingly drawn by a participant in a workshop for political and military leaders in Indonesia. The creator said it represents Plowshares' role as a catalyst for peace and justice.

Catalytic programs provide the elements for combustible mixtures. The accounts in this Newsletter give you a glance into persons and programs and partners that are about the work of recognition and empowerment for the sake of a more just, peaceful and sustainable world community. We are proud to have these partners and to accompany them on their long walk toward freedom and renewal as they become catalysts themselves.

The depiction as catalyst focuses on our ministry of recognizing and empowering persons and institutions that are about transforming their organization, communities and nation. Other illustrations are: new centers for conflict resolution in urban centers from Hartford to Los Angeles; the Empowering for Reconciliation with Justice program that helped equip South African religious and community leaders to work together toward a national vision of dramatic social and political

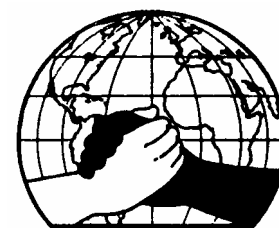


change; and the Center for Empowering Reconciliation and Peace in Jakarta working with government, military, universities, and non-governmental organizations to constructively address conflicts. These and numerous other persons and institutions that Plowshares Institute has been fortunate to serve are making a critical difference as they harness the energy of conflict for constructive change.

Recognition of each person's God-given right to human dignity may be the most urgent calling in our strife-torn global community. The denial of human dignity--and provision of basic human needs for survival--is a tragedy for an astonishing number of

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*Education, Research, and
Dialogue toward a More
Just, Sustainable, and
Peaceful World Community*

South Africa August, 2002 by Rev. Dr. Alvan N. Johnson, Jr.

The most powerful element of travel for many is coming home. Experience creates energy and new perspective that can be translated into change in one's own sphere of influence. The recent trip sponsored by Plowshares Institute and the Christian Conference of Connecticut was no exception. Undoubtedly, each individual came home with unique understandings of what we heard and saw. Each individual will have the opportunity to incorporate this experience into some movement toward Truth and Reconciliation in America. For the clergy members, in particular, one can only hope that this experience will bring each of us closer to God.

After an interesting case study and introductory session at the airport and a smooth flight, the group settled into the Koinonia Retreat Centre for 5 days in Johannesburg and Pretoria. The group met with religious and political leaders, including Molefe Tsele (Director, South African Council of Churches), Sheena Duncan (Black Sash), Neville Naidoo (Joint Enrichment Youth Programme - JEP), Bishop Paul Verryn, Professors Piet Meiring, Tinyiko Maluleke, Barney Pityana and the new U.S. Ambassador Hume. Each shared his or her perspective on where South Africa has been, is now and where it must go next, if the new South Africa is to become a model for inter-racial power sharing. All see challenges ahead, even as they can look back and see distance covered in recent years.

Fascinating real life experiences included a tour through the streets of Johannesburg with a group of young people from JEP and an overnight Soweto "exposure," both of which gave brief glimpses into the reality of life for the middle class in post-Apartheid South Africa. Power and wealth remain in the hands of a few, and the majority of those who were oppressed still live in intolerable poverty in a nation that boasts pockets of enormous wealth.

Four days in Durban included a stay in a convent and a visit at an orphanage where the effect of the AIDS epidemic on families and children is tragically exposed. The Diakonia Council of Churches hosted discussions with numerous community leaders including Methodist Bishop Purity Malinga and Anglican Bishop Rubin Phillip.



Members of the Plowshares/Christian Conference of Connecticut delegation of Church leaders meet with Archbishop Desmond Tutu in Cape Town.

On Friday, August 23 the group moved on to Cape Town for meetings with political leaders Bishop Stanley Mogoba and Joe Seremane; with farm workers mediator, Trevor Steyn; and with Laurie Nathan, Rodney Dreyer and Alison Lazarus from the Centre for Conflict Resolution. At the University of Stellenbosch we met with Russel Botman, the first black rector of this formerly all-white institution, and with Professors Frederick Marais and Jurgens Hendriks at the School of Theology. The final highlight of the trip was a meeting with Bishop Desmond Tutu.

In his concluding remarks Bishop Tutu touched on what is perhaps the central issue in studying any political and/or religious community of people, whether they are a group of traveling companions, a denomination, a nation or a race. Humanity is flawed. Those who grasp hold of power often misuse it and build oppressive institutions designed to perpetuate their position. Even when power shifts, humans clutch onto whatever vestiges of power they possibly can – economic power or political power. Even when there is as radical a shift in leadership as has occurred in South Africa in recent years, new leaders do not turn out to be flawless. The challenges in South Africa of the AIDS epidemic, poverty, economic inequity, land disputes and many other challenges still lie ahead for the new leaders.

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Journey from India to Latin America by Florae Helmstetter

Going to India with Plowshares created a special passion in my life.

Meeting Mother Theresa at the Mother House in Calcutta has been one of the highlights of my life! I was surprised to learn that some people viewed her efforts as a band aid solution for the problems of the poor instead of trying to solve the systemic problems that lead to poverty. But her vision was to treat the poorest of the poor with dignity, care and the love of Christ. As we waited for her to arrive, I prepared myself to meet a great person – but as I turned to meet her – what I saw took my breath away! There was NO question in my mind that this was a Holy person. She spoke with such commitment and passion about the love of Jesus. Her message was that through our hands the work of Jesus and God continues to be carried out in the world.

Our Christian beliefs call us “to act.” This has led my family and me to serve with Medical Ministries International (MMI) to provide medical care in Central and South America to poor people in the mountains. We act as general helpers dispensing anti-parasite drugs, taking blood pressure, running the pharmacy and coordinating people “traffic” control. At the end of the day, after caring for 200-400 people, you’re tired but it’s a good tired. I find

the people to be surprisingly content, open, accepting and proud of their families. Part of the clinic includes the Christian message that these “North Americans” have come to care for their needs because Christ calls us to do so. A health education class also helps teach parents healthier ways to cook, clean, etc.

It is my plan to prepare myself better for serving with MMI by becoming more proficient in Spanish and getting some medical training. I thank God that I went on this Plowshares trip and had the opportunity to meet Mother Theresa.



Florae Helmstetter administers medication in a MMI health clinic in rural Honduras

State-wide Peace Movement Gains Momentum

Reclaiming the Prophetic Voice, a Connecticut-wide network of Christian, Jewish, and Muslim clergy and lay leaders was formed in May, 2002. It focuses on supporting and equipping religious leaders to regain a prophetic voice in the midst of growing emphases on military action in the name of the war on terrorism; increased infringements on human rights, particularly for poor marginalized people; and the erosion of civil liberties for foreign nationals and U. S. citizens. In a dangerous self-censoring ethos following 9/11, religious leaders have found it increasingly difficult to speak about issues of social justice. Even thoughtful, moderate remarks, if critical of government policy, are viewed as “unpatriotic.”

Plowshares staff members have worked with the Steering Committee of RPV and provided workshop training for members in the area of conflict transformation and peacebuilding. The most recent workshop focused on the tension between the faith-based calls to speak prophetically and be an agent of reconciliation.

As an outgrowth of this workshop, Plowshares and Reclaiming the Prophetic Voice organized a group of ten Christian, Muslim, and Jewish religious leaders to present their concerns to Connecticut Senator Christopher Dodd. Several of these religious leaders had been on previous Plowshares Institute traveling seminars, four of them on the recent August seminar in South Africa. On September 24, a gathering of some 150 members of religious communities joined in a prayer vigil and to support the religious leaders who presented their views to the members of Senator Dodd’s staff in his Wethersfield office.

This action led to stronger commitment by RPV members and Plowshares to continue dialogue with Connecticut’s legislative representatives in order to oppose the Bush administration’s request for authorizing the use of force against Iraq and a national security strategy focusing on pre-emptive military strikes. These acts of education and witness drew on the experiences of Truth and Reconciliation manifested in South Africa and supported the National Council of Churches lobbying efforts against the “rush toward war.” Plowshares is called to an ongoing commitment to struggle for creative and peaceful alternatives to militant and aggressive approaches to promoting national security both overseas and at home.

Putting the Rainbow Together by The Rev. Katie Keene

“Why did they take the rainbow apart?” questioned a third grader in Roanoke, Virginia after a class presentation on my recent trip to South Africa. How does one make intelligible to young children the power and life changing experiences that seventeen of us had between August 14 and August 28 in South Africa as part of Plowshares travel seminar on National Reconciliation, Transformation and Faith?

In sharing with elementary students, I attempted to distill an incredibly intense two weeks of experiential learning into four major points: 1) Children can change the world; 2) Apartheid—South Africa’s history then and now; 3) We are meant to be life-long learners!; 4) What I learned and am growing with because of this trip.

Just as a word of background, I was able to go on this trip in large part through a grant from a private foundation in Roanoke, which in turn expects me to help design projects to address race relationships and shared community vision in this region. Beginning with the children of an inner city multicultural school which my daughter attends seemed to be a great place to start! South Africa helped me understand the powerful role that children can play in finding solutions to very real issues in our own region and country.

I began by describing to the class our weekend in Soweto, including the gracious hospitality of a family of 13 in a house the size of their classroom, and a bed I shared with two girls just about their age. I told them about standing on the street corner of the elementary



Johannesburg youth in the JEP program show their city to Bishop Peter Rosazza and Rev. John Sonnenday.

school where Hector Peterson and his classmates went to school, and where on June 16, 1976 students defied the order for Afrikaans to become the language of instruction in their school. To stand there with Abraham Shoba, our guide, who was among the students on that historic day was truly a transformational experience. He described the unarmed students marching down the hill, armed police marching up the hill to meet them, and the confrontation that followed, leaving thirteen-year-old Hector Peterson dead. The world’s attention was finally sharply focused on apartheid.

Years of student protests laid the groundwork for this stand against the evil of apartheid. Children can and did change the world, I told my young friends. “Never underestimate what each of you can do to change this world for the better.” The group of students I addressed already understands what happens when people of different colors cannot accept each other for who they are—South Africa gave me hope that the youth of our country can lead our own nation in the ways of justice and true equality among all people.

And what about apartheid? Archbishop Desmond Tutu, whom we were most privileged to visit, has described South Africa as a Rainbow People. What happens when the rainbow is split apart? “Even though red is my favorite color, what would happen if there was only red in the rainbow?” I asked the students. “There wouldn’t be a rainbow,” said Garrison, one of my young friends. I told them what happened when parts of the rainbow were kept apart. “Certain parts began to forget how important the other parts of the rainbow were, and to hate those other colors,” I said. The rainbow had to be put back together again, we concluded, in order for all the parts—all the people to be whole. This image gave rise to energetic discussion among classmates, who are currently navigating their own racial challenges in a highly diverse school.

I also underscored for my young friends how important and exciting it was for me to be with all these adults who went away to learn and grow together. Many of the pictures I selected to show them were of our group around conference tables, with the Minister of Transport, with university deans and heads of churches, leaders of AIDS pro-

Continued on the next page

Putting the Rainbow Together, continued

jects and youth programs, all of us meeting, talking, learning together. Then came the really hard part. What were the most important things I learned while I was in South Africa?

I learned that in the midst of incredible challenges--with some of the world's worst poverty, unemployment, homelessness, and disease--South Africa is a country of hope, expectation, and joy. I learned that the youth of South Africa have and continue to raise their prophetic voices about the ways we are meant to live as a

human family. I learned that this nation is profoundly aware of how far they have to go to become a nation of equals, and that there is a commitment to remember and live out the fact that they are all in it together.

I learned over and over again from the faith, integrity and courage of black, white, colored, and all other colors of the rainbow that when people are willing to come to the table together, peace can become a reality. More than anything else, South Africa humbled me, and taught me that never again will I

be able to say that I as one person cannot change a seemingly insoluble problem. In countless day-to-day kinds of ways, I hear myself saying, "If my black sisters and brothers can forgive and look to the future, so can I" - "if my white brothers and sisters can acknowledge their past and build a better future, so can I".

The trip to South Africa was not just about where another nation has been or where it is going. It is about a witness that transforms the smallest details of my life here at home. I pray it will always be so.

CERJ - Chemistry at Work in Los Angeles

Great things have come from a small group of highly committed community leaders in Los Angeles. In 1996 twenty Latino/a, African American, Asian and Anglo clergy and lay leaders were selected from a pool of applicants to be part of a Plowshares pilot project. Over a period of two years, the group, which named itself CERJ – Christians Empowering for Reconciliation with Justice- studied mediation, negotiation and cross-cultural communication. The training culminated in a two-week immersion seminar in South Africa, which focused on the role of peacebuilding in constructive social and political change.

At this point Plowshares staff moved from training to a supportive role as the CERJ team developed its own steering committee, shaped its vision, and sought independent funding. Four years later, the CERJ program has a full-time coordinator, Kathleen Chuman, and is housed in the offices of the Urban Leadership Institute in central LA. A recent survey revealed that since 1998 CERJ volunteers have equipped more than 1000 people in the Los Angeles area with peacebuilding skills through a variety of workshops.

With a goal of nurturing current members and expanding the pool of volunteer trainers and mediators, CERJ sponsors a quarterly networking event. These programs, led by Kathleen and other skilled

professionals, offer support and fresh concepts to those already working as mediators and trainers and help incorporate those recently trained who want to become more active in the network.

CERJ outreach takes many forms. The Coordinator and volunteers led a weekend retreat and three in-school training sessions to help a changing high school become "a place where all students feel welcome and included." The principal noted that he has seen "significant changes in the students that went through the CERJ training." He wants to schedule a follow-up program this fall. Working from a congregational base in Pasadena, another team launched a 40-hour conflict transformation training series to equip area people to affect their communities and constituencies. The Agents of Reconciliation and Transformation (ART) program includes power analysis and cross-cultural competency as well as basic CT skills. Participants range from clergy, seminary students, and medical doctors to a union organizer, school counselor and several community activists. Other teams brought bilingual skills to work in Roman Catholic and Presbyterian congregations to help members positively handle the challenges and tensions that arise in multi-cultural, multi-lingual congregations.

Plowshares is grateful to the "CERJ Forward" Newsletter for excerpts and information included in this article.

Indonesian Delegation Visits South Africa

In response to a South African senior delegation visit to Indonesia in March, 2001, an Indonesian delegation of senior military, political, government, academic and NGO representatives from Indonesia visited South Africa from May 21 – 28, 2002. Members of the delegation were strategically selected for their ability to influence issues of national reconciliation and resolution of regional conflicts. Although from very diverse sectors of society, the team members worked with compatibility and creativity in their interaction with comparable South African leaders to apply what they learned to the Indonesian context.

The Indonesian delegates affirmed that, although circumstances in South Africa around Truth and Reconciliation were very different from those in Indonesia, what they learned was important for designing a national process for reconciliation and programs to constructively address violent conflicts in Indonesia. The team committed to meeting on a regular basis and to draw their respective constituencies into ongoing training in Empowering for Reconciliation and Peacebuilding.

Support for this exchange came from the Rockefeller Brothers Fund and from the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. Craig Arendse, Director of the Mediation and Transformation Practice SA, Judo Poerwowidagdo, Director of the Center for Empowering Reconciliation and Peace, Indonesia, and Alice and Bob Evans of Plowshares provided coordinating roles as they had in the March 2001 visit of a South African delegation to Indonesia.



Members of the Indonesian delegation, Judo Poerwowidagdo and Irawatit Harsano, participate in a conference with South African leaders from political, academic and civic sectors.

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the world's children.

This includes Palestinian and Israeli children killed or traumatized in a cycle of violence and revenge. It includes thousands of Iraqi children dying from disease and contaminated water from policies of a vicious local despot and a U.S. sponsored embargo. Denial of human dignity and survival rights affects millions of children who will die of the consequences of a preventable HIV/AIDS global pandemic. It directly affects one-in-five children in the wealthiest nation in the world who live below the poverty line. In the past year this number grew by almost a million. It is this denial of the human right to survive that every Plowshares educational workshop or advocacy program highlights. Plowshares staff members consistently promote the critical importance of addressing systemic injustices with skills of conflict transformation and peacebuilding which are based on recognition and empowerment.

Individuals, organizations, and religious communities are empowered when they have the confidence and skills to address their own problems and challenges. Plowshares partners and colleagues around the world embody the mandate to be agents of reconciliation and transformation when they risk intervening constructively in conflicts. The use of case studies and the *Peace Skills* curriculum enable non-profit agencies and non-governmental organizations to identify and act on core de-humanizing problems in their churches and communities. Their responses range from providing a home and education for children made homeless by AIDS and poverty to working with senior political and military leaders in Indonesia for a more transformed and just society.

As you read these stories, know that as a supporter of Plowshares, you are present in this spirit of liberation and

Reflections from Philadelphia, by Dwight Lundgren

I entered the Plowshares training initiative [Empowering Communities for Reconciliation with Justice - ECRJ] in Philadelphia as the pastor of a center city, multi-cultural congregation. My goal was to acquire and develop capacities and insights to strengthen my ministry and, equally important, to develop relationships with activists in other ethnic-cultural communities who shared similar commitments. Little did I realize how the experience and commitment would change my work and me.

Within six months after finishing the training phase of the program and moving into the subsequent three-year commitment to community involvement, I found myself in a new position, Director of Reconciliation Ministries for the American Baptist Churches USA.

Although this role entails several different types of responsibilities, the essential task is to create awareness, provide resources, and conduct workshops in community conflict mediation/transformation capacities. I have led these workshops for churches, regional staff, conference programs and in two of our American Baptist seminaries. One of my goals is to introduce the material to all of our seminaries so that their leadership considers incorporating some form of the training into the formal curriculum. Currently, I am exploring ways to incorporate the training into the way in which our denomination develops new church planters.

My work also involves attention to a broad range of peace and justice issues for which the

perspectives of community conflict transformation as well as the skills are essential. I have been assigned to staff several committees that deal with challenging issues and multiple perspectives precisely because their deliberations are well served by the use of transformational listening skills.

The network of ECRJ colleagues in Philadelphia have remained in touch using their training individually in a number of initiatives as well as seeking an ongoing community identity. Volunteer teams of local trainers accept requests to conduct workshops and are available as adjunct resources for the Campolo School for Social Change. Connection with a range of activities within the Hispanic community of North Philadelphia is currently being explored through the efforts of Rev. Raul LeDuc, another of the original team members.

I have over and over again been moved by the testimonies of participants in the workshops who say: "This training has transformed my life and way of thinking."



Dwight Lundgren (back row left) with graduate students at Central Baptist Seminary, Kansas City.

South Africa Continued from page 2

The government and the Church must learn to partner for the greater good. The Churches must lead the way across the racial divide because the Christ we claim to hold in common demands it. Bishop Tutu said, "Because you are involved in a noble struggle does not mean you remain noble automatically." We all have a responsibility upon our return to our version of Apartheid to take a good hard look in the mirror for the "planks in our own eyes." But, Bishop Tutu left us with a message of hope. "In the end, even the Devil will not be able to resist the love of God."

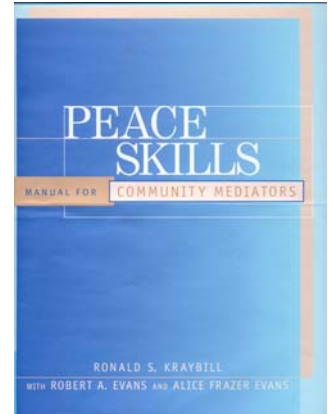
International Translations of Peace Skills Curriculum

In May 2001, World Vision International and the Jakarta-based Center for Empowering Reconciliation and Peace celebrated the publication of the first translation of the two-volume *Peace Skills* curriculum into *bahasa* Indonesian, the national language. World Vision provided skilled translators, and Judo Poerwowodagdo, director of the Center, provided editing expertise, particularly in contextualizing the material for various Indonesian cultures.

The authors of *Peace Skills*, Ron Kraybill and Bob and Alice Evans, are now looking forward to the release of a Spanish translation in November 2002. The translation of both the *Peace Skills Manual for Community Mediators* and a revised version of the *Peace Skills Leaders' Guide* is being done by Manuel Quintero, the editor of the Latin American Council of Churches (*Consejo Latino Americano Iglesias*) magazine and newsletter. He is based in Ecuador. Marty Collier, a former Methodist missionary in Central America now living in Atlanta, is drawing on both her experience with "Central American Spanish" and her training in a graduate level Peace Skills seminar to work with Manuel on translating specific terms and concepts to be better understood in a broad Latin American context.

Local workshops are already using it and the curriculum will be a critical resource in October, 2002 for a "high level" seminar on peacebuilding for Indonesian military, police and political leaders. These workshops will be led by staff from Plowshares and the Indonesian Center for Reconciliation and Peace.

The Spanish translation has already been requested for workshops by Alternativa, a social service and justice organization based in Lima, Peru; by Evangelical Theological Seminary in Matanzas, Cuba; and for peace training led by the Latin American Council of Churches in Central and South America.



Ugandan Peacebuilders

Under the energetic leadership of Canon Grace Kaiso, the Uganda Joint Christian Council has developed training programs to engender a culture of peace throughout Uganda. UJCC helped organize an initial Peace Skills workshop in Kampala in 2000. The workshop, led by Plowshares staff, included some 40 Ugandan religious and community leaders. Designated small groups of these leaders, functioning as "rapid response teams," were cited by the government as critical to the success of peaceful national elections.

Following a second advanced joint-training and "training of trainers," led by Plowshares staff in 2001, the Council applied for and received funds from USAID to conduct regional workshops. These locally led workshops have helped spread peacebuilding skills throughout the country. The workshops have particularly engaged members of the Ugandan Parliament from North Eastern Uganda, an area fraught with serious border conflicts. The picture



Steve Kisembo (UJCC) working in Northern Uganda with Karamajong tribes involved in cattle disputes.

accompanying this article shows participants in one of the numerous disputes successfully mediated by Ugandans equipped in national and local workshops.

Using these peacebuilding skills, Canon Kaiso and other members of the Council have also consulted with Muslim, Catholic, Anglican, and Seventh Day Adventist representatives to promote national dialogue. These religious leaders are now engaged in monthly meetings to discuss issues of national peace and stability.