GLOBAL HEARTBEAT MAGAZINE

DIPLOMACY OF THE
Heart

The Baskerville Institute

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Launching the Global Heartbeat Magazine: A Platform for Diplomacy of the Heart

The Global Heartbeat Magazine is dedicated to exploring the transformative power of heart-centered diplomacy—an approach rooted in empathy, mutual respect, and genuine human connection. This publication will feature insights, stories, and reflections from scholars, diplomats, and community leaders committed to fostering understanding across cultural, national, and ideological divides. As the official publication of the Diplomacy of the Heart Conferences, Global Heartbeat serves as a vital platform for sharing diverse perspectives on how diplomacy, informed by the heart, can shape a more compassionate and peaceful world

Why The Global Heartbeat Magazine Is Needed Today

INTRODUCTION

In a world increasingly marked by fragmentation—geopolitical tension, cultural misunderstandings, and declining trust in institutions—Global Heartbeat emerges as a vital platform to re-center our collective efforts on what matters most: the human connection at the heart of diplomacy, scholarship, and civil society.

This publication is designed to carry forward the mission and insights of the Diplomacy of the Heart conferences. It serves not only as a record of proceedings and ideas shared at these gatherings but as a living, evolving platform for scholarly dialogue, civic reflection, and global collaboration.

Through essays, case studies, interviews, and commentary, Global Heartbeat invites scholars, practitioners, and students to explore their own disciplines—from law to literature, education to economics—through the lens of relational diplomacy, empathy, and ethical responsibility. It encourages contributors to ask: How does my field help us understand, connect, and care for one another across borders?

By showcasing interdisciplinary insights and cultural narratives, the magazine will amplify voices often overlooked in traditional diplomatic discourse and support emerging thinkers committed to building bridges of trust, respect, and shared humanity.

Global Heartbeat is more than a publication—it is a heartbeat of values we believe are essential to global peace: dignity, justice, compassion, and hope.

We are pleased to include papers from our February 2025 Student Research Forum. These students did an outstanding job presenting their ideas and papers. We are proud of their work, vision, energy and dedication

- **Dr. Bahman Baktiari,**
Director of the Baskerville Institute

What is Diplomacy of the Heart?

BAHMAN BAKTIARI

While seemingly simple, the concept of "heart" carries profound significance across cultures and civilizations. From ancient spiritual texts like the Quran to contemporary psychological research, the heart is recognized as the wellspring of emotion, empathy, and human connection. Diplomacy, often defined as "the art, the science, and the means by which nations, groups, or individuals conduct their affairs," can be profoundly enriched when practiced from a place of deep humanity—when it becomes diplomacy of the heart.

Importantly, diplomats are not limited to official representatives of governments. A "diplomat of the heart" is anyone—an educator, a student, a humanitarian—who strives to build bridges of understanding and mutual respect across cultures and communities.

The Heart in Sacred Texts and Global Traditions

Across religious traditions, the heart is the metaphorical center of moral and emotional intelligence. In the Bible, a virtuous heart is described with terms such as "wise" (discernment and sound judgment), "pure" (freedom from malice), "upright" (integrity), "righteous" (justice and moral duty), and "good" (kindness, generosity, and compassion). These qualities shape a person's actions and relationships with others.

In the Quran, the heart—qalb—is referenced 132 times, symbolizing the dynamic nature of a person's inner being. Its literal meaning, "to turn," highlights its potential for transformation,

growth, and change. Similarly, in Judaism, the heart is central to the ethic of empathy, exemplified by the enduring principle of "Love your neighbor as yourself."

In Persian, qalb reflects the emotional and spiritual core of a person, frequently appearing in poetic and spiritual literature to describe one's connection to the divine. In various languages—Japanese (kokoro), German (Herz), Uzbek, Russian, Arabic (qalbi), and Hebrew (ke'ev lev)—the heart is used in idioms and metaphors to convey emotional resonance, empathy, sorrow, and love.

The heart is not just a cultural metaphor—it is a universal symbol of sincerity and interconnectedness.

The Poetic Legacy of the Heart

Throughout history, poets and philosophers have used the heart as a lens to interpret the human condition. The 13th-century Persian mystic Rumi urged individuals to release the heart from worldly bonds in pursuit of divine consciousness:

"O heart, release your bonds from the world
So that excitement and consciousness may reach you from the world."

Persian Sufi mystic Rumi

"Human beings are members of a whole,
In creation of one essence and soul.
If one member is afflicted with pain,
Other members uneasy will remain.
If you have no sympathy for human pain,
The name of human you cannot retain."

Saadi Shirazi's Bani Adam ("Children of Adam"),

Having endured the Mongol invasion and decades of exile, Saadi's works—translated and celebrated globally—serve as early manifestos of ethical diplomacy and cultural humility. As Goethe noted, Saadi's message transcends borders:
"Their goals are much the same."

Toward a New Model of Diplomacy

In a world facing increasing polarization and conflict, diplomacy of the heart offers a compelling alternative—one rooted in shared values rather than competing interests. It invites us to "listen with an open heart," to approach dialogue not through dominance or persuasion, but with the intent to understand.

This approach does not negate policy or protocol—it enhances them. Diplomacy of the heart is a strategy for peacebuilding that taps into our collective humanity. It calls upon us to build not just treaties, but trust; not just alliances, but authentic relationships.

By integrating emotional intelligence, ethical integrity, and cross-cultural empathy, diplomacy of the heart becomes a transformative tool. It is a call to action for those who believe diplomacy should not merely serve national interests but elevate global well-being.

How to Operationalize Diplomacy of the Heart

The concept of the heart's importance throughout history is clear, as evidenced by the legacies of Sardari and Wallach. Yet, how can a practicing diplomat make diplomacy of the heart an integral part of their diplomatic repertoire? Is it practical? How would institutions like the Foreign Service Institute teach it? Here are five strategies to operationalize Diplomacy of the Heart:

Create Safe Spaces for Dialogue:
Establish platforms for open, honest dialogue between people from diverse backgrounds. This can include interfaith forums, community dialogues, and online spaces for respectful exchange. Engage thought leaders and scholars from the Middle East, including Israel, to foster a commission on Diplomacy of the Heart principles.

Promote Storytelling: Organize small groups where individuals share personal stories to build empathy and understanding. These Hearts & Minds conversations should be guided by experts, encouraging participants to develop resolutions on reconciliation, trust-building, and embracing the dignity of difference.

Publicize Empathy-Driven Diplomacy: Highlight diplomatic efforts that emphasize dialogue, understanding, and empathy in international relations. Facilitate communication sessions with policymakers and diplomats to share best practices.

Engage Youth in Heart-Centered Forums: Young people offer fresh perspectives, free from ingrained biases. Encourage collaborations with organizations youth organizations in Central Asia and Middle East

Support Foundation Initiatives: Advocate for funding to support programs that advance principles of empathy, human dignity, and the recognition of diverse perspectives in global interactions, facilitated through higher education and community projects.

Implementing diplomacy of the heart is challenging. Anger, lack of empathy, and unwillingness to recognize others' suffering are significant barriers. Effective facilitation is essential to move discussions from past grievances toward future cooperation, maintaining a respectful and constructive dialogue throughout.

Conclusion: A Moral Imperative
"Diplomacy of the Heart and the Legacy of Islamic Law in Central Asia: Historical Foundations and Contemporary Peacebuilding" is not just a theoretical construct—it is a moral imperative. It draws on a universal language—the language of the heart. Leading with this language enables us to do more than just negotiate; it allows us to heal, connect, and transform relationships.

Diplomacy of the Heart

Building Stronger Societies, Forging Bonds of Friendship Promoting Peace in Central Asia and the Middle East

The following articles in this edition of the Diplomacy of the Heart Magazine are papers that students from around the state of Utah submitted to for our 2025 student forum. The first three (Alex Keogh, Emma Martins, and Hunter Fillerup) were the winners who were given the opportunity to present their papers at the 2025 Samarkand conference. All of the bios for the authors are featured on

The Power of Intercultural Dialogue & Education on Peacebuilding Conference
Opening Reception April 27, 2025

H.E. Abilov Feruz Ne'matullaevich
The First Deputy Governor
Samarkand Regional Government

Dr. Bahman Baktiari
Executive Director
Baskerville Institute

Foreign Language Education as an
Instrument for Building Peace

ALEX KEOGH

In an increasingly polarized world riddled with conflict, finding innovative ways to promote understanding across cultural and ideological gaps is a central focus of peacemakers around the globe, especially throughout the critical regions of Central Asia and the Middle East. While governments representing different states on the international stage seek to negotiate diplomatic resolutions to varying national interests, civil society and grassroots people-to-people reconciliation efforts are necessary supplements to build more tolerant and conflict-resistant communities. As the foundation for shaping the future generation of changemakers, education can play a unique role in fostering peace by engendering empathy, curiosity, and creative future-oriented thinking in students. This essay will explore how foreign language education can enable young people to become agents of peace across international divides, bolstering a comprehensive long-term peacebuilding strategy in Central Asia and the Middle East.

Positive Outcomes of Foreign Language Education

Throughout history, peacebuilding leaders and savvy diplomats have paid the price to learn the languages of other peoples to establish mutual understanding and strengthen cooperation. From medieval Popes who learned Gothic languages to

"If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart."

Nelson Mandela

communicate and establish peace with invading Gothic tribes to American founding fathers whose training in French aided them in garnering France's support for the Revolutionary War, transformative peacemakers have intuitively understood the value of granting the priceless gift of human dignity to their counterparts by learning their language. Perhaps no one illustrated the power of language learning in reconciliation more memorably than Nelson Mandela, whose choice to learn the language of his Afrikaans captors during his 27-year prison sentence on Robben Island granted him a priceless tool in unifying the divided factions of his country and building trust as the first president of South Africa.

Research suggests that second language proficiency continues to predict stronger conflict resolution skills among bilinguals today (Novitskiy et al.). Modern psychological science helps shed light on how foreign language learning can become a tool to build trust and heal divides. Seminal psychological assessment research by linguistic psychology pioneer Dr. Alexander Z. Guiora and his colleagues at the University of Michigan established a link between "empathic capacity" and "the

overall capacity to acquire a second language" (Guiora et al. 113). Acquisition of a group's foreign language allows the learner to more easily open psychological pathways to empathy with a group that becomes increasingly more familiar and less strange. In addition to breeding empathy, recent research has illustrated that foreign language learning is also conducive to deeper curiosity (Mochizuki and Christodoulou), an adaptive reaction to cognitive dissonance that can enable conflict transformation and reduce violence (Grant; Ury). Foreign language skills have also proven to be useful in conflict situations, allowing negotiators to more effectively regulate emotions and obtain more favorable outcomes (Keysar et al.). Most importantly, learning the language of another group grants precious human dignity to native speakers the learner interacts with, especially when the language is spoken by a group at conflict with or unfamiliar to the learner. Learning the language of an unfamiliar group brings both parties into meaningful contact, making the native speakers of a target language feel more real and relevant to the learner while reducing stereotypical constructions of outgroup counterparts (Nguyen and

tongue of another group acknowledges the shared humanity of both parties and affirms the mother tongue group's legitimate claim to communication on its own terms. This exchange has prompted some foreign language education scholars to refer to the field as "education in human dignity" (Matz), while UNESCO regards language choice as foundational to "human dignity, peaceful coexistence and sustainable development" (Giannini). This process of building regard for human dignity is a necessary prerequisite for creating an environment where meaningful dialogue can flourish.

Perspective-Taking and Foreign Language Education

Perspective-taking, or the act of "imagining oneself in another's shoes to understand their visual viewpoint, thoughts, motivations, intentions, and/or emotions" (Ku et al. 79), is among the most widely researched and empirically reliable methods for transforming attitudes related to reconciliation and building intergroup dignity. Psychological research has consistently shown perspective-taking exercises and interventions to create social bonds between groups by increasing contact and reducing intergroup stereotypes (Wang and Tai). Notably, this style of exercise has proven effective in helping Israeli and Palestinian participants transform intergroup perceptions, suggesting that perspective-taking interventions can be effective across deep divides spanning cultural, political, and linguistic gaps (Bruneau and Saxe). As participants imagine themselves in the position of outgroup counterparts and attempt to see the world the way these individuals might, familiarity and willingness to communicate across

ideological gaps builds.
Perspective-taking, or the act of " imagining oneself in another's shoes to understand their visual viewpoint, thoughts, motivations, intentions, and/or emotions" (Ku et al. 79), is among the most widely researched and empirically reliable methods for transforming attitudes related to reconciliation and building intergroup dignity. Psychological research has consistently shown perspective-taking exercises and interventions to create social bonds between groups by increasing contact and reducing intergroup stereotypes (Wang and Tai). Notably, this style of exercise has proven effective in helping Israeli and Palestinian participants transform intergroup perceptions, suggesting that perspective-taking interventions can be effective across deep divides spanning cultural, political, and linguistic gaps (Bruneau and Saxe). As participants imagine themselves in the position of outgroup counterparts and attempt to see the world the way these individuals might, familiarity and willingness to communicate across ideological gaps builds.

Foreign language learning may be understood as an extended process of perspective-taking, as learners seek to master the linguistic mechanics and manner of expression of another group, imagining the world around them through the eyes of the outgroup. This system of code-switching allows learners to shed cultural impediments to understanding and humanizing the perspective of outgroup members. This sort of creation of a linguistic ego that takes the perspective of the native speaker is what psycholinguist Guiora and his colleagues called "[the] act of extending the self so as to take on a new identity" (Guiora et al. 112). Such a

transformational understanding of foreign language learning suggests that the study of foreign language belonging to an outgroup has strong peacebuilding potential by preparing learners for effective intergroup dialogue through an extended form of linguistic perspective-taking.

Practical Suggestions

The review of empathetic benefits and perspective-taking activities outlined above suggests that peacebuilding potential of language programs will be strongest when perspective-taking activities are integrated into foreign language material, allowing learners to more fully immerse themselves in the imagined world of an outgroup population. These activities may take many different forms, such as civil discourse and debate in the target language (in more advanced language level settings, such as curriculum modeled in the United States Language Flagship Program), roleplaying activities (in intermediate language level settings), or simple introductions contextualized to outgroup culture (in beginner language level settings). Developing curricula that encourage learners to imagine future peaceful possibilities with groups experiencing intergroup conflict will most effectively capitalize on the unique and empirically supported potential for language learning to strengthen agency among learners, conditioning participants to view the future as malleable and subject to effective peace advocacy (Matz et al.). Learning the language of groups perceived as unfamiliar or hostile, engaging in active perspective-taking activities, and imagining a future where the learners can effectively collaborate with the outgroup members can be a powerful combination for

transformative peace education, allowing educators to raise a generation of young people enabled to resist conflict and motivated to promote peace.

The demonstrably high potential for foreign language education as a setting for intergroup attitude transformation suggests that regions focused on preventing, managing, and resolving conflict (such as the Middle East and Central Asia) should invest more heavily in targeted long-term foreign language education programs that help bridge cultural and national gaps. Given the agile nature of language training programs, education initiatives can be initiated by a combination of local/national governments (revising foreign language curriculum in schools to target learning outgroup population languages) and grassroots civil society organizations (providing community classes in target languages). Implementation of language training programs may be adjusted based on regional circumstances and preferences; for example, outgroup language training may be offered in conjunction with English classes where appropriate.

Foreign language education initiatives, whether led by civil society organizations or government reforms, may have particularly high transformative potential for conflicting groups with little exposure to the language of the counterpart. For example, significant linguistic distance exists between the majority groups of Saudi Arabian and Iran, two groups in the Middle East between which tensions are particularly high. Civil society groups may find success in supporting free Arabic classes in Iran, where only around 2% of the population speak Arabic as a second language (Ghanbari and Rahimian). In doing so, peacebuilding organizations may answer a growing call to build a stronger foundation for peace in the Middle East by promoting effective cultural exchange (Custers and Schmidt) in an innovative way. By choosing to give the gift of human dignity through integrated foreign language learning and perspective-taking curriculum, governments and organizations can engage not only in pragmatic geopolitical peacemaking strategy, but in diplomacy of the heart.

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Speech and Debate
As a Tool for Peacebuilding

EMMA MARTINS

Youth have always played a pivotal role in shaping the future, and their involvement in peacebuilding is no exception. From advocating for social justice to driving global movements, young people have proven themselves as formidable agents of change. However, despite their potential, they often face significant barriers that limit their ability to fully contribute to peacebuilding efforts. This essay explores the vital role of youth in peacebuilding, the challenges they encounter, and the skills and tools required to overcome these barriers. I argue that speech and debate is an underutilized platform for nurturing peacebuilding skills and propose how organizations can bridge the gap between youth potential and practical opportunities for impact.

Youth as Peacebuilders

 From the 1960s Children's March in the United States (Volle and Carson) to youth-led initiatives in conflict zones such as the Syrian Youth Assembly, young people have been at the forefront of efforts to bridge divides. In Ghana, youth facilitate inter-ethnic dialogues (USAID); in the Solomon Islands, they've formed caucuses to amplify the voices of rural communities (UN Sustainable Development Group). Historically, youth have been pivotal in some of the world's most significant movements—from dismantling Apartheid to championing democratic transitions across nations (Manulak).

 Today, they continue to lead, with figures like Greta Thunberg and Malala

Yousafzai becoming powerful symbols of youth activism for climate justice and peace. This is but a snapshot—youth have always been, and will continue to be, integral to progress. If peacebuilding is to thrive, it is clear that advancing youth must be part of the equation.

 This sentiment was reaffirmed by the United Nations with the passage of Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace, and Security on December 9, 2015. The resolution, which calls for the inclusion of young people in peace processes and decision-making, recognizes their unique role in conflict prevention and peacebuilding. It outlines five critical pillars: participation, protection, prevention, partnership, and reintegration (UN Meetings Coverage and Press Releases). While the passage of this resolution was a massive step forward, youth continue to face significant challenges in the road ahead of them.

Challenges

Youth face several significant challenges that hinder their ability to fully contribute to peacebuilding efforts. These barriers prevent them from realizing their potential as key agents of change. While there are many barriers, I focus on two key challenges that continue to emerge.

First, is the lack of access to education and resources. Youth often face limited educational opportunities and financial barriers that prevent them from acquiring the necessary skills for peacebuilding. UNESCO's Global

Education Monitoring Report stresses that a lack of access to education directly impacts youth's ability to engage in peace efforts, making it clear that investment in education and development of peacebuilding skills is critical to empowering youth (UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report).

 Second, is political and institutional exclusion. Despite international calls for greater youth participation, many young people are still shut out of formal decision-making processes and peace negotiations (Peltz). The United Nations' Resolution 2250 highlights the need for youth inclusion in peacebuilding, but these efforts often fall short. Without a seat at the table, youth voices remain unheard in shaping policies that directly affect their future.

Essentially, there seems to be a significant gap between skills and tools. Youth lack the education and resources to practice peacebuilding skills and are often excluded from the tools or opportunities to implement and utilize them.

Skills and Tools

 Here, I define *skills* as the competencies required to engage in and facilitate peacebuilding. Some of these key skills, as outlined by UNICEF, include communication, active listening, assertiveness, tolerance, a spirit of inquiry, open-mindedness, advocacy, negotiation, and cultural empathy (Reilly). These skills are crucial because they not only enable youth to navigate complex social dynamics but also help

them foster dialogue, resolve conflicts, and promote social cohesion across diverse communities. However, without the proper training and education, youth struggle to develop these skills fully.

Additionally, I define tools as the resources and platforms that facilitate the application of these skills, such as mentorship programs or community initiatives.

Many youth leaders may possess the skills but feel they lack the tools to implement them effectively, or vice versa —they may have access to tools but lack the necessary skills to utilize them fully.

Consider this analogy: there's a common saying that if you give a man a fish, you feed him for a day, but if you teach him how to fish, you feed him for a lifetime. However, as comedian Trevor Noah astutely pointed out, this adage often omits a crucial element: you must also provide the man with a fishing rod. Knowing how to fish is futile without the proper equipment, just as having a fishing rod is useless without the knowledge of how to fish.

The same principle applies to the disconnect between skills and tools in youth engagement. For young leaders to thrive, they need both the skills to lead and the tools to implement their ideas effectively.

However, it is crucial to recognize that the divide between skills and tools is not solely the result of limited access—it is also driven by a lack of awareness. While numerous opportunities exist for youth to develop and apply peacebuilding skills, these opportunities are not always easily accessible or visible. As a result, young people may be

unaware of the resources, networks, or programs available to them, further compounding the issue of access (Williams).

However, I believe this lack of awareness is not one-sided. While youth may not be aware of opportunities, organizations and institutions may also fail to be aware of potential prospects or demographics.

The real challenge, then, lies in bridging this awareness gap between skills and tools, both in terms of providing youth with information about the opportunities that exist and ensuring organizations understand the untapped potential of youth in various contexts. By addressing both the actual and perceived lack of opportunities, we can better equip young people with the skills, tools, and support they need to become impactful agents of change—particularly through platforms like speech and debate, which remain an untapped resource for fostering the next generation of peacebuilders.

Speech and Debate

Speech and debate is a transformative activity that empowers individuals to develop essential skills such as critical thinking, effective communication, and empathy. These skills are crucial not only for academic success but also for fostering peaceful dialogue and resolving conflicts. While the benefits of speech and debate are far-reaching, for the purpose of this paper, I will focus specifically on the National Speech & Debate Association (NSDA) in the United States and other similar associations and programs that follow comparable events and rules. I do this for two main reasons: first, debate as an activity can vary widely, and much of the

accessible research focuses primarily on NSDA-adjacent events, ensuring that the statistics I use are accurate and applicable. Second, my personal experience as both a competitor and a coach has provided me with a stronger understanding of the structure and impact of these specific programs.

That being said, there are two main types of events: Speech and Debate. Both events offer unique opportunities for students to develop a wide range of critical skills, each contributing to their growth as thoughtful communicators and informed citizens.

In speech events, participants craft and deliver persuasive speeches, provide informative presentations, or perform dramatic pieces that often carry personal or socially significant messages. Whether sharing a personal story, addressing pressing domestic and international issues, or interpreting powerful scripts, these activities enhance students' abilities to articulate complex ideas and connect with diverse audiences on a meaningful level (National Speech & Debate Association).

Debate events, on the other hand, immerse students in rigorous discussions on real-world issues, from public policy to philosophical dilemmas. Debaters explore and argue both sides of a topic, fostering a deep understanding of different viewpoints and the mechanisms for societal change. This practice not only sharpens critical thinking and analytical skills but also cultivates empathy and tolerance, as students must grapple with perspectives they may initially disagree with. Through this dynamic interplay of argumentation and reflection, debate

equips participants with the tools to engage thoughtfully in complex discussions, making it an invaluable training ground for future peacebuilders (National Speech & Debate Association).

As referenced earlier, peacebuilding requires a set of core competencies such as communication, active listening, negotiation, cultural empathy, and the ability to advocate effectively (Reilly). These are not just abstract qualities but practical skills that are honed and refined through the rigorous practice of speech and debate. In every round of debate or speech performance, students are challenged to communicate clearly, listen attentively to their opponents or audiences, and respond thoughtfully, all while navigating diverse cultural and ideological perspectives (National Speech & Debate Association).

This connection to peacebuilding is profound. In debate, students engage with real-world issues and conflicting viewpoints, which mirrors the complexities of conflict resolution and peace efforts. They learn to articulate their thoughts assertively yet respectfully, negotiate differing perspectives, and foster mutual understanding—all crucial in mediating disputes and fostering peaceful dialogue.

This ongoing development equips them to become effective peacebuilders, capable of navigating and resolving conflicts in their communities and beyond. Speech and debate, therefore, act as both the classroom and the practice field where future peace leaders are shaped. To reference the analogy used earlier, this is where

students develop their skills, this is where they are taught how to fish. But what about their fishing rods?

Call to Action

To fully harness the potential of speech and debate in peacebuilding, it is imperative for civil society organizations (CSOs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and other peacebuilding entities to recognize and leverage this invaluable resource. While speech and debate equips young individuals with essential peacebuilding skills, these organizations have the capacity to provide the tools—the "fishing rods"—to apply these skills effectively. There are several approaches these organizations could take to bridge this gap and foster a new generation of peacebuilders.

One effective strategy would be to partner with local debate organizations and leagues to host thematic tournaments focused on peacebuilding. The structure may resemble something like the "Coolidge Cup" debate tournament, which successfully integrates a central theme related to civic education and leadership. In this tournament, sponsored by the Calvin Coolidge Presidential Foundation, students engage with topics that align with the sponsor's mission, debating relevant issues and competing for scholarships or other incentives (Calvin Coolidge Presidential Foundation). Similarly, a peace-focused tournament could be organized, where students tackle resolutions such as "Resolved: On balance, religion has a positive impact on peacebuilding." Extemporaneous speakers could address real-world questions related to local peace initiatives. For instance, the Heravi Peace Institute at Utah State

University could collaborate to host a tournament that immerses students in critical peacebuilding topics, providing both a platform for intellectual engagement and opportunities for practical involvement.

Alternatively, CSOs or NGOs could collaborate with the NSDA to create an event dedicated to peacebuilding concepts and practices. It could be implemented at the national level and reach debaters across the country. Organizations might then donate funds for the national tournament to be awarded to champions, incentivizing participation and offering tangible rewards. This approach not only elevates the visibility of peacebuilding within the debate community but also empowers students to pursue careers in this vital field.

Through these partnerships, speech and debate becomes more than just academic exercises—they transform into incubators for future peacebuilders, equipping young people with both the skills and the tools to make a meaningful impact on global peace efforts.

The proposed plan offers significant steps forward to the challenges faced by youth peacebuilders, addressing the critical gaps in skills, tools, and awareness outlined earlier.

First, it directly fosters the development of essential peacebuilding skills. By participating in debate events centered on peacebuilding themes, students enhance their communication, advocacy, negotiation, and tolerance skills. Engaging in debates on topics such as the role of religion in peace or the effectiveness of local peace initiatives allows students to practice active

listening, assertive speech, and cultural empathy—all of which are foundational to successful peacebuilding.

Second, the plan addresses the issue of tools by creating direct connections between students and peacebuilding organizations. Through partnerships with debate leagues and the hosting of thematic tournaments, students are introduced to organizations that offer real-world opportunities, such as internships, workshops, and volunteer roles. These engagements serve as the "fishing rods," equipping students with practical avenues to apply their skills in meaningful ways and contributing to ongoing peace efforts.

Finally, this approach bridges the awareness gap. Students become more aware of the existence and mission of peacebuilding organizations, and in turn, these organizations gain access to a pool of talented and driven youth who are eager to make a difference. This mutual awareness not only enhances the visibility of peacebuilding initiatives but also ensures that both parties—students and organizations—can collaborate more effectively to advance peacebuilding goals. In this way, the proposed plan creates a dynamic ecosystem where skills, tools, and awareness converge to empower the next generation of peacebuilders.

Conclusion

The empowerment of youth as peacebuilders is essential for creating a more just and peaceful world. While challenges such as limited access to education, political exclusion, and a gap between skills and tools persist, the solution lies in bridging these divides through strategic partnerships and initiatives. By recognizing the transformative power of speech and debate, civil society organizations and peacebuilding entities can provide the necessary platforms and resources for youth to thrive. Through these efforts, we can equip the next generation of peacebuilders with both the skills and the tools to foster meaningful change, ensuring that their voices are not only heard but also acted upon in the pursuit of global peace.

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Seeking Peace and Pursuing It:
Education and Exposure as Tools for Change
HUNTER FILLERUP

Introduction

When pausing to reflect on the interconnectivity of the modern world, one cannot help but marvel at the sheer scale of it all. So many staggering technological advancements have come about in the past few hundred years, whether it be the advent of the internet, the development of different modes of transportation such as the airplane, or the development of the telephone. With this ability to connect with nearly anyone at nearly any time, and with John Donne's words that "No man is an island" ringing in our ears, the reality of the turmoil of our modern world is jarringly juxtaposed with what one might have hoped for. And yet, this reality is not one of necessity. We have seen time and time again how humanity has built peace through dialogue and understanding. By better understanding the successes of bridge-building efforts from bygone eras and the context for our current problems, we can better understand how to foster peace and reconciliation between cultures.

This paper will discuss how increased exposure to foreign cultures and improved education on building a culture of peace are essential to building peace across cultures. To do so, I will begin by exploring past efforts toward peace-building and what lessons we can learn from them to inform us regarding future peace-building. I will then offer context to the specific difficulties facing peace-making efforts today. Finally, I will explain how these two key principles help to address these difficulties.

Past Efforts

The Salam Institute for Peace and Justice is an international organization that furthers inter-religious dialogue, utilizes resources, contributes to peace-building, and provides knowledge to governmental and non-governmental organizations aimed at enhancing models for conflict resolution. While studying the Salam Institute's peace-building efforts, I came across a project of theirs from 2011 to 2016. The Salam Institute, in conjunction with USAID, ran a five-year program in Burkina Faso, Chad, and Niger to reduce the risk of instability of local communities and increase their resilience to violent extremism.

This project had four strategic objectives, they were, as follows:
1. Youth More Empowered
2. Increased Moderate Voices
3. Increased Civil Society Capacity to Address Community Issues
4. Strengthened Local Government

The most important lesson from this report is that change is possible. And that the high and noble goal set in trying to build peace is possible. Youth programs and efforts aimed at schools flourished, several towns made significant economic progress, and technical assistance enabled communities to participate in local development activities.

Of course, this does not mean that the whole endeavor was not without its challenges. About six pages of the report explain some difficulties in their

efforts and lessons learned for moving into the future. Such lessons included increasing focus on implementing local partners, synchronizing activities with the security realities in the host countries, and shaping programs to fit in with pre-existing cultures.

While there is hope, we must understand that there isn't a silver bullet that will solve all problems inherent in peace-building. Change is a gradual and painstaking process; many effects take years to see. For this reason, one must focus on the sustainability of efforts and ensure that the local programs will continue to exist autonomously. It is through these marginal, seemingly insignificant changes that significant change comes.

Modern Challenges

The challenge with peace-building efforts is that there is never one solution that will work in all cases. Even if there were to be a solution that works perfectly in one setting, it would be naïve to suggest that one could rely on it solely and indefinitely. Thus, to appropriately take on challenges in peace-building across differing cultures one must first understand the composition of said challenges.

Technology plays a massive role in the world today, both economically and socially. Many of the points expressed in this paper focus on the importance of consistent interaction with differing cultures and viewpoints. The difficulty arises when considering the technological disparity between

countries building peace. This disparity has grown larger as technology continues to grow at a more rapid rate and as many countries' infrastructures are decimated, putting them back at a sort of technological square one.

Additionally, it is important to ensure that as work is done to diminish alienation and xenophobic tendencies, unique cultures remain preserved. As culture continues to adapt and change at an increasingly rapid rate, cultures mustn't be pushed into a mold but rather that cultures and faiths are approached with an air of reverence and respect. This problem is exacerbated once again by the advent of social media.

Increased Exposure

Increased exposure to people from diverse backgrounds is critical in peace-building. When individuals interact with those from different cultures, religions, nationalities, and races, they are more likely to develop empathy and tolerance for those people. This makes sense intuitively, when we spend more time with something, specifically in building positive memories and associations with that thing, we grow to like and become more accepting of it.

One effective way to encourage exposure is through community-based programs that foster a sense of belonging. Several programs can help with this, particularly in the US. With the influx of Middle Eastern immigrants to the US in recent years, , the opportunity to create such programs has risen greatly. Cultural exchange programs, sports teams (like basketball and cricket, respectively), and interfaith seminars are examples of programs that might be beneficial.

Social media and online platforms play a unique role in exposure in today's interconnected world. Especially for youth, the time and types of media consumed significantly influence their development. By curating content that celebrates cultural diversity, platforms can highlight positive stories of intercultural collaboration. Even accounts not explicitly focused on diversity can help with exposure. Influencers from different backgrounds should participate in normal social media activities and trends, and their culture will naturally play a role. Helping to inspire open-mindedness in audiences that may not otherwise encounter diverse perspectives.

Improved Education

Education is one of the most powerful tools for fostering a culture of peace, by integrating lessons about cultural diversity, conflict resolution, and critical thinking into curricula, societies can equip future generations with the knowledge and skills necessary not only to navigate a multicultural world but to thrive in it. Effective education systems not only teach students about different cultures and religions but also help them develop empathy and an appreciation for shared humanity.

A focus on improving cultural education can mean several things. There are so many factors and ways to improve cultural education that it can be overwhelming. Once again, it is important to focus on marginal improvements. While understanding that much can be said about increasing education in countries outside of the US, this section of the paper will focus on improving cultural education in the US for both immigrant students and multi-generational American students.

One major tenant of peace-building is to foster a sense of belonging in individual communities. For this reason, it's crucial to focus on the experience of immigrant perceptions of their new and foreign communities in the US. In a 2018 study, they found that knowledge of English plays a major role in feelings of acceptance and belonging for immigrant families. By increasing the number of resources for English learning in the US, both for youth attending school and their parents, strides can be made in helping to build bridges and increase dialogue between cultures. By learning English, it enables them not only to learn more about American culture but to share their own culture with members of the community.

For multi-generational Americans, several efforts could have a positive effect on fostering peace between cultures. A 2023 study has shown the benefits not only of teaching English to students born outside of the US but of introducing Arabic to students born in the US. If we were to implement this study on a larger scale, potentially by introducing an Arabic or Persian curriculum to a high school with a significant Middle Eastern population, we could study the effects on the high schoolers. We would expect similar benefits such as an increased understanding of the relationship between a culture's perspectives and practices, and an increased interest in knowing more about another's culture. For communities where it might not be feasible to introduce an entirely new class, work can be done to implement more information on Middle Eastern cultures and language in the regular curriculum, such as world history classes.

Conclusion

The pursuit of peace across cultures requires a concerted effort to foster understanding, empathy, and collaboration. By drawing lessons from past efforts like those of the Salam Institute and addressing modern challenges, such as technological disparities and the preservation of cultural identities, we can create a framework for meaningful intercultural dialogue. Increased exposure to diverse cultures and improved education systems are pivotal in dismantling barriers and nurturing a culture of peace. These approaches equip individuals with the tools to appreciate shared humanity and empower communities to better understand each other and develop a legitimate interest and love for the differences across cultures. While the journey toward peace is gradual, history reminds us that marginal efforts can yield profound change. By seeking peace and pursuing it, we can bridge divides and forge a world that values connection over conflict, ensuring that the interconnectedness of our modern era becomes a catalyst for harmony rather than division.

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Action of the Mind and Heart:
A Framework for Peace through Interfaith Dialogue

MIRABELLA ARCHIBALD

Throughout history, extremist religious ideology has been utilized as a tool to promulgate and protract conflict. From the Sacred Wars in ancient Greece, to the bloody Hundred Years' War in the Middle Ages, to contemporary conflicts such as the rise of ISIS, religious rhetoric has been infused into some of the darkest and most disturbing of humanitie's epochs. Especially in the context of the Middle East and Central Asia, religious sectarian violence has long contributed to the instability of the region. While history paints a bleak picture of the ability of religious groups to coexist, I believe that religious institutions - particularly interfaith dialogue - can act as catalysts for peacebuilding. Peace emerges as a possibility when such interfaith endeavors purposely introduce cognitive dissonance through education efforts, foster emotional connectivity through shared spiritual experiences, and funnel energy gained from the previous two activities into peacebuilding projects. In other words, I believe when interfaith dialogue centers around the mind, the heart, and decisive action, it has the potential to both reduce and prevent patterns of violence especially in regions such as the Middle East and Central Asia where religious diversity is an ever present reality.

When first initiating interfaith dialogue efforts, education concerning the various religions involved is crucial to mitigate the effects of harmful stereotypes and misinformation.

Additionally, educational materials can foster a spirit of community by showcasing doctrinal and behavioral similarities between diverse religious participants. Such information is likely to produce a reaction amongst participants labeled by psychologists as "cognitive dissonance". Cognitive dissonance is defined by the American Psychological Association as "a psychological state resulting from inconsistency between two or more elements in a cognitive system" (American Psychology Association). This inconsistency may occur when an individual who ascribes to a certain faith tradition learns that members from a religion they have long believed was antithetical to their doctrinal foundation actually propagate similar beliefs (for example, Christians may experience dissonance when discovering that Jesus is revered as a holy individual in the Islamic faith).

Psychologists have noted that cognitive dissonance produces a heightened state of arousal, often exhibited in a physiological drive similar to hunger. This is due to the fact that recognizing inconsistencies in one's world view is extremely uncomfortable, causing a strong motivational drive in individuals experiencing this reaction to resolve the discomfort. This drive, especially when paired with insightful educational materials, can be the impetus to adopting new attitudes (American Psychology Association). The case of Jewish-Muslim Women's Leadership Initiative provides an excellent case

study of this phenomenon. The initiative brought together Muslim and Jewish college aged women in the US for a semester-long program focused on examining the student's unique ability to contribute to constructing peaceful relations between Jews and Muslims in reaction to the Israel-Palestine conflict. The first stage of the program was a history unit where multiple perspectives concerning the conflict were taught to the students. The perspectives were taught side by side, purposely highlighting divergence. In response to these educational modules, students quickly began to experience cognitive dissonance. As one Jewish student wrote: "Even at a young age I had knowledge of the conflict, especially the … Jewish perspective … I was taught that most criticism of Israel is hyperbole … I find it challenging to confront that aspect of what I was taught" (Lin et al. 212).

However, after enthusiastically engaging in the full length of the program, including online dialogues, face to face workshops, and a student-led peacebuilding project, students recorded significant attitude shifts. One Jewish student reported: "I am more understanding of the dual nature of the conflict and the fact that there is a reasonable explanation for both sides of a conflict". A Muslim student commented: "I realized now more than ever how similar we all are despite religious ideas and values that separate us. The general ideas of humanity are the same" (Lin et al. 212).

While the Jewish-Muslim Women's Leadership Initiative is an example of an organization successfully utilizing dissonance promoting educational materials to spark positive attitude changes, it is important to provide the caveat that experiencing dissonance also has the potential to cement deep set prejudices. For example, in an experimental study seeking to understand the effects of cognitive dissonance on humanization efforts, 660 Israeli citizens were measured for levels of anger and hate towards Palestinians along with their proclivity to utilize self justification as a tool to address dissonance. The participants were then provided with an op-ed written by an Arab-Israeli published on Holocaust Memorial day expressing empathy for the Israeli people. Study participants who experienced high levels of dissonance and were prone to self-justification experienced no statistically significant difference in attitudes between their pre and post experiment results, exhibiting stable levels of anger, hate, and ingroup centric beliefs (Gubler et al.).

This example illustrates that while education regarding the participating religious groups is essential to establishing a foundation of unbiased information, unless the experience is paired with tangible human connection, the drive to resolve dissonance may not result in attitude changes. Religious institutions are uniquely equipped to resolve this issue, as powerful human connection is generated through the medium of shared spiritual encounters. To illustrate this, one study gathered reports from groups that had experienced forms of trauma or adversity, specifically examining how shared spiritually focused experiences

affected relationships. The study found that shared spiritual experiences transformed intergroup relationships, paving the way for relational meaning, increased relational depth, relational healing, and encouraged relational action (Dollahite et al.). Another study hosted peacebuilding workshops with 58 students representing 11 religions and questioned the students about their motivations and willingness to engage in peacebuilding efforts with other religious groups. The study revealed that individuals both more quickly gained respect for and were more willing to participate in religious behaviors (such as rituals) than they were to accept, connect, or find common ground with religious values or beliefs (Bennett).

Though religious rituals vary widely across different religions, studies have noted that in interfaith dialogue spaces, utilizing group workshops to engage in shared reflection, meditation, or prayer instead of generic ice breaking "getting to know you" activities are far more successful in creating a lasting sense of community and connection. Dr. Marcel Poorthius explains in his book Rituals in Interreligious Dialogue: Bridge or Barrier that rituals "form the collective memory of a religious community" (Poorthius, 2). When an individual participates in religious rituals, even if the ritual is not necessarily tied to functional meaning, it connects the participant to the community (Poorthius, 2). This connection softens the heart, allowing for the new information gained from the education provided that initially sparked cognitive dissonance to ultimately solidify into positive attitude changes. In the case of the students involved in the Jewish-Muslim Women's Leadership Initiative, it is important to note that the attitude changes exhibited amongst the

participating students were not actually realized until after they had completed all steps of the program, including workshops focused on actively participating in a shared religious experience (Lin et al. 212).

Once knowledge has been obtained, relationships have been developed, and attitude changes have taken place, actively developing concrete action plans and projects for future engagement effectively "freezes" the skills and experiences gained throughout the dialogue, equipping participants to be agents of change in their communities (Lewin). Without this key step, the possibility of peacebuilding expanding beyond the participants involved in the dialogue is low. However, when participants are specifically recruited as ambassadors for the peace, the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and experiences they engaged in during the course of the dialogue, has the potential to miraculously transform wider communities.

Peacebuilding interfaith workshops conducted between 1997 to 1999 that required participants to create projects before concluding their participation saw a wide range of projects with long lasting results. One group decided to transfer the experience they had engaging in rituals together to promote healing, reconciliation, and forgiveness among communities in Rwanda. Another group in Northern Ireland began a movement to hold Protestant church leaders accountable for violence conducted during sectarian parades. A third group carried out resettlement activities to integrate ex-combatants engaged in the Liberian civil war back into society (Abu-Nimer).

Students especially have the potential to generate remarkable change following an interfaith-dialogue experience. In the case of the Jewish-Muslim Women's Leadership Initiative, each student was required to complete a peace action project before the conclusion of the program. Projects were just as varied and just as inspiring as the projects produced by the interfaith workshops previously discussed. One student founded a Jewish-Muslim co-ed book club where students had the opportunity to read and discuss books curated to represent the various perspectives of the Israel-Palestine conflict. Another student started a campaign to recruit students to the Jewish-Muslim student alliance, a campus based student organization engaged in similar conversations. Finally, a third student took her experiences to social media, founding a YouTube page that followed her journey of self discovery, garnering thousands of views. As the program came to a close, one of the Jewish students remarked: "I think that the creation of initiatives was the most effective part of the program. We were able to put our creative energies to work!" (Lin et al. 215)

In conclusion, though some would point to religion as the breeding place of some of humanity's most sobering conflicts, I argue that the unique ability for religious institutions to foster human connection can enable interfaith-dialogue to transform conflict and promote peace when such dialogue embraces cognitive dissonance, enables emotional connectivity, and energizes longevity through project engagement. This model particularly holds potential for transfiguring conflict in the Middle East and Central Asia. Designing peacebuilding curriculums to reflect this pattern and implementing it on college campuses and highschools could inform young people from an early age to expect to gain connection through religious diversity rather than discord. Additionally, framing peacebuilding as a religious invitation and collaboration is far more inviting than other initiatives that may appear colonial in nature. Ultimately, by reframing interfaith dialogue as a transformative tool rooted in education, emotional connection, and collaborative action, we can harness the unifying power of religion to inspire a new generation committed to peace and coexistence.

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Arab Shepherds, Jewish Fathers, and Playing Basketball:
Building Peace and Community

ROSE CAMERON

In the poem to the right, "An Arab is searching for his goat on Mount Zion," Israeli poet and author Yehudah Amichai draws parallels between a Jewish father and an Arab shepherd, one searching for his son, the other searching for his goat (Amichai). While they are searching for different things, they share more in common than they do not—they are both near Mount Zion, they are both searching, and when they find the son and the goat among the bushes, they both laugh and cry at what is no longer lost. Amichai uses the poem to emphasize the concept of coexistence and similarity. While Arabs and Jews are often in conflict with one another, particularly on Mount Zion, they find that they share humanity in common.

Amartya Sen, an Indian economist, philosopher, and winner of a 1998 Nobel Memorial Prize, wrote Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny, which promotes coexistence through recognizing similarity. Sen argues that the idea of identity is detrimental to coexistence because it puts people in one-dimensional stereotypes that are difficult to see beyond (Sen). For example, in the aforementioned poem, if the Arab shepherd and Jewish father were only to see each others' identity as "Jewish" or "Arab," they would be unable to see the common identity that they share—people who have lost something and are happy to have found it. The poem's final recognition of similarity echoes what Sen believes: it is important to understand the multifaceted identities of others, which encourages

"An Arab shepherd is searching for his goat on Mount Zion
and on the opposite mountain I am searching for my little boy.
An Arab shepherd and a Jewish father
both in their temporary failure.
Our voices meet above the Sultan's pool, in the valley between us."

Yehuda Amichai

peace and coexistence (Chakrabarty). When people from different faiths first meet, they may see only differences. Yet their shared experience of being religious creates an initial connection, often leading to the discovery of more common ground—they are both part of families; they may enjoy the same foods and stories; they may even have shared hobbies.

Typically, peacebuilding is seen as something that must be done on a large scale, such as peace talks between diplomats or other large measures. However, lasting peace between people may be better fostered through personal connections. Samantha Ruppel, a researcher for the Peace Research Institute in Frankfurt, points out, "Peacebuilding is often described as a top-down process, even though the beneficiaries of the process are on the local level." While peace processes from a governmental level are occasionally needed to stop immediate violence, they are often not as effective in discouraging and removing structural

and cultural violence and restoring peace within communities (Ruppel). In these instances, it becomes necessary for peacebuilding to shift focus to local action and other grassroots methods to create change. One way in which grassroots peacebuilding can be effective is by tapping into something that is already there—hobbies; while many people believe they are the polar opposite of individuals they are in conflict with, through finding shared interests and hobbies, they are able to build local peace because they see each other's multifaceted identities. Local programs that push people from different religious and ethnic backgrounds to participate in interest groups ranging from basketball to orchestras are great ways to build peace because they foster improved relationships and inter-group dialogue.

One way in which people are able to explore the multi-dimensional identities of others is through conversation and dialogue. Learning to understand the perspectives and experiences of others,

specifically those who are in conflict, can be an important pathway to peace. Building peace often begins with simple proximity—people from different sides of a conflict sharing the same space and learning to see each other as human. PeacePlayers, a non-profit organization puts this concept into action through basketball, bringing together youth from divided communities in South Africa, Northern Ireland, the United States, and the Middle East. By placing young people on mixed teams, PeacePlayers creates an environment where cooperation becomes essential for success. In addition to basketball practice, players also engage in conflict resolution education and leadership development activities. In the Middle East, where the program unites Israeli and Palestinian youth, teammates discover shared passions and forge friendships that transcend conflict ("PeacePlayers Middle East"). Through these connections, players begin to see each other not just as "Israeli" or "Palestinian," but as teammates, athletes, and friends.

A Jewish participant, Tamar Greenbaum describes her experience in PeacePlayers, saying, "Arabs and Jews mostly don't see each other, or we see each other but we have no connection or anything. We can live five minutes from each other, and never meet or talk." She explains that while playing basketball, she became close friends with Sireen, an Arab participant, whom she never would have met if it weren't for PeacePlayers ("PeacePlayers Middle East"). Sports promote dialogue by putting people in the same space— players have to interact and communicate on the court in order to be successful, something teammates do naturally. Once they are able to communicate on the court, it becomes

easier to communicate about other issues. Sports also promote dialogue because players become interested in their teammates' identities off the court, which allows them to disregard stereotypes, and see the humanity in one another.

Not only does PeacePlayers create connections within the program, it also sparks discussions about coexistence in divided communities. Jinan, an Arab participant, reflects on her experience in PeacePlayers, "At first, people didn't understand why I played basketball with Jews. I explained that when you see people as humans, not stereotypes, it changes everything. You see the person for who they really are" ("PeacePlayers Middle East"). This impact extends beyond the court—as participants challenge their own prejudices, they become advocates for understanding in their communities by explaining their experiences to family and friends. Not only did Jinan forge a friendship with Jewish teammates, but she also wanted to extend the peace by talking to other Arabs about why she values the Jewish players on her team. Her positive experience on the court allowed her to promote peace to those who weren't in the program.

Sports are not the only programs that allow for people to see the multifaceted identities of others. The West-Eastern Divan Orchestra, formed by an Argentine-Israeli conductor and a Palestinian-American academic, is an organization that brings together young musicians from Israel, Palestine, and other countries in the Middle East, along with some international performers. Not only does the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra provide opportunities to players who may not otherwise have the chance to play in an orchestra, but it

also is able to foster dialogue between communities that are in conflict ("West-Eastern Divan Orchestra"). The orchestra uses many similar grassroots peacebuilding techniques as PeacePlayers, the first being proximity. Many of the orchestra participants would have otherwise never met each other if they had not joined the orchestra. By just being in proximity with one another, they may be able to realize that nobody fits the unifaceted identities that may have been unjustly thrust upon them. Additionally, in order to create music, it is necessary that stand-partners and sections work together. When musicians are first able to have discussions about music, a shared interest, they are more easily able to find other things that they have in common, and also have discussions about things that they do not have in common.

However, organizations like PeacePlayers and the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra are not infallible. The current conflict in Israel-Palestine has made PeacePlayers efforts there come to a hopefully temporary pause. While the West-Eastern Divan is still functioning, the conflict has made it difficult for many Israeli and Palestinian musicians ("Two Arab-Israeli musical initiatives reckon with the war in Gaza"). Sometimes, when peacebuilding is needed the most, it becomes difficult for organizations like these to function due to concerns of safety affecting their members. These organizations are built to create positive peaceful interactions and discourage structural and cultural violence at the local level, rather than actively stop physical violence and war (Kurtzer). While these programs won't solve all world conflict, they have the potential to lessen them and create community between conflicting groups.

One of the most promising things about these organizations is that they mirror Amartya Sen's philosophy—only a simple shift in perspective can create big change. Small things done at a local level can foster dialogue and understanding between conflicting groups, which can help bring about big-picture changes. This is a tactic that future initiatives might keep in mind while trying to create peace—although peacebuilding may seem more plausible as a top-down process, the people it affects are at a local level. Therefore, local action that pushes people from different religious and ethnic backgrounds to participate in dialogue about shared interests and hobbies is a great way to kickstart a peacebuilding process because it fosters improved relationships and inter-group dialog.

Near the end of Amichai's poem, he writes,

> **"Afterward we found them among the bushes**
>
> **And our voices came back inside us, Laughing and crying.**
>
> **Searching for a goat or a son**
>
> **Has always been the beginning of a new religion in these mountains."**

As the shepherd and father participate in similar actions, they are joined together in laughter and tears (Amichai). The poem sets aside their conflicting religious and ethnic identities and instead creates a new community based on how much they have in common. Similarly local programs promoting shared space and activities can do the same thing, building new communities where there had been conflict.

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Bridging Divides:
A Dialogue for Peace and Understanding

KIRSTEN DEWBERRY

Rwanda is beautiful in July, mid-70s, light rain on occasion, and a cool breeze. Upon arriving, I found myself gawking at the incredulous amount of motorcycles on the street, and the chaotic vibrance of the local markets. This admiration was fleeting, however, replaced almost instantaneously as I couldn't help but wonder about the scars hidden beneath the surface of each Rwandan that passed by. In 1994, Rwanda faced one of the darkest chapters in human history, the genocide against the Tutsi. Over 800,000 lives in just 100 days were claimed by the hands of the Hutus, leaving an indelible mark on its people and communities. In only 2 short weeks, I witnessed first-hand meaningful dialogue and understanding aimed towards peace, how faith and mistrust played a large role in this horrific tragedy, the education that was manipulated amongst communities, the lack of involvement from foreign influence but the determination of local organizations to foster peace, and how the youth are being empowered to move forward. This journey demonstrated that while the scars of the past may never fully heal, dialogue, understanding, and collective action can pave the way for a future in which history does not repeat.

Prisoner Fellowships Rwanda is a non-profit organization dedicated to restoring societal cohesion. It has been about 30 years since the genocide occurred and Rwandan communities are experiencing the complex process of reintegrating former genocidaires back into society from prison sentences. This non-profit

helps these individuals blend into different neighborhoods in order to once again live a normal life. I had the incredible opportunity of watching a former genocidaire and a victim of the genocide sit side-by-side laughing, talking, hugging, and outwardly expressing their cherished friendship. It was surreal watching a woman, who had experienced so much loss and trauma in 1994, embrace and banter with a man who had taken countless lives. The most frequently asked question these two answered on a panel was, "How did you overcome your hatred for each other?". The answer, in its simplest form, was the power of dialogue.

When people engage in meaningful dialogue, they often discover common values, fears, and aspirations that transcend their differences. This is precisely what these two individuals experienced. It took time, especially in a society with such major historical grievances, but as this man acknowledged his past wrongs and the woman acknowledged that hatred brought no healing, they began the reconciliation. As the author of an article in the *Vision of Humanity* states, "by acknowledging the commonalities that exist among faiths, communities can build trust and overcome misconceptions that often fuel conflicts" (IEP & UNESCO). The 1994 Rwandan genocide is one extreme example of how radicalization and a lack of understanding can lead to the most horrific of tragedies. It is through such conversations, where individuals can address their differences and recognize

shared humanity, that lasting peace is built.

Christian churches were some of the largest killing sites in 1994, inevitably weaving religion into the mix of genocide. Religious tensions are often rooted in centuries of conflict, oppression, or discrimination, which can make initial dialogue fraught with hostility. During the spring of 1994, religion was used against certain Rwandans as a tool for division. However, despite these challenges, interfaith dialogue provides transformative opportunities for fostering peace. It creates a platform for mutual understanding, allowing participants to focus on shared values. For instance, in post-genocide Rwanda, religious organizations played a crucial role in reconciliation by promoting forgivenmeness and healing among communities divided by ethnic and religious affiliations. While interfaith dialogue requires patience, humility, and resilience, it holds the potential to break down barriers and create sustainable pathways to peace.

Educating society, starting at a young age, about the importance of tolerance, inclusivity, and compassion can be a game changer in promoting peace. Exposing the younger generations to a variety of cultures or religions helps to dismantle stereotypes and prejudices that often arise from ignorance or fear of the unfamiliar. By learning about diverse cultures and religions, young people develop empathy and a broader understanding of the world. In Rwanda,

educational institutes address teaching about "Hutus" and "Tutsis" very differently than pre-genocide and the government removed the need for ethnic distinction on identity cards. On a broader level, incorporating lessons about world religions, cultural traditions, or values that vary across the world into school curriculums helps students appreciate the qualities that shape the human experience. Young people can be susceptible to hate-driven, radicalized ideologies so by implementing such education, this can be prevented. Rwanda emphasizes unity and reconciliation in its current education system to ensure that future generations do not repeat the mistakes of the past. By instilling the principles of tolerance and mutual respect we empower young people to become agents of peace and change, capable of addressing challenges in their communities and contributing to a more harmonious world.

International cooperation to address the root causes of conflict must prioritize genuine partnerships over paternalistic approaches, as demonstrated by the failures and lessons from the Rwandan genocide. In 1994, the international community largely stood by and watched, allowing atrocities to escalate unchecked. When aid eventually arrived in Rwanda, much of it focused on reactive measures, such as refugee support, which ended up benefiting the escaped perpetrators, rather than addressing systemic issues. However, the "savior complex" displayed by some international actors often undermined Rwandan agency and fostered dependency rather than sustainable solutions. This, therefore, highlights the importance of balance. By embracing collaboration, international cooperation

can more effectively address the structural roots of conflict. Addressing these root causes requires a multifaceted, long-term approach that goes beyond immediate crisis response. Root causes often include systemic inequalities, weak governance, resource scarcity, and deep-seated social divisions, all of which demand coordinated efforts from international actors. Most importantly, when it comes to international collaboration, is prioritizing local agency, ensuring that solutions are tailored to the unique cultural, political, and historical contexts of the conflict. Supporting grassroots organizations can foster sustainable reconciliation and healing. International actors should serve as facilitators, providing resources and expertise while allowing local communities to lead the peace-building process.

The peace-building efforts within Rwanda stand as a great example in what reconciliation can look like for other nations. One of the most significant lessons from Rwanda's efforts is the critical role of community-driven reconciliation. The Gacaca courts, a traditional justice system reintroduced after the 1994 genocide, allowed communities to address crimes in an inclusive and localized manner. These courts emphasized truth-telling, accountability, and forgiveness, helping to rebuild trust among neighbors. The Rwandan people are some of the most community-driven people I have ever met, demonstrating the power that civil society has. During those 3 months in 1994, the international community failed Rwanda, overall showing Rwandans that they can only help themselves. I visited non-profit after non-profit all focused on their own community and the reconciliation post-genocide, striving to

heal. Civil society organizations, like Prisoner Fellowship Rwanda, demonstrated the power of grassroots initiatives in addressing deep-seated grievances. Future efforts can draw from Rwanda's example by emphasizing community participation, fostering shared identity, and creating systems that balance accountability with reconciliation.

Standing amidst the students, families, communities, and children of Rwanda empowered me to become an agent of peace. I witnessed the strength and resilience of the Rwandan people and listened to the stories of men and women who bear the burden of memories from the genocide. Their stories, woven with pain and perseverance, were a testament to the importance of peace. The conversations surrounding this topic that I was given the privilege to be a part of were not just historical lessons; they were living testimonies, bearing witness to the power of humanity's capacity to rise from the darkest depths of conflict. It was here, in the heart of Africa, where I gained a fervent passion to create change even just within my own community. I sat amongst a multitude of women, listening to their stories of rape, slaughter, and various other atrocities occuring to them and all around them during that 100 days. Listening to these stories is what inspired me to begin volunteer work within my own community as I arrived home. I know that, similar to my experiences, sharing stories, no matter how painful and tragic, can inspire the younger generations to act.

The lessons of Rwanda are not bound by its borders, they are universal. They call on all of us to be architects of peace, to nurture dialogue in our communities, to advocate for justice, and to stand against indifference. They challenge us to confront our own prejudices and see in each other the threads of a shared story. Rwanda's story is one of tragedy, but it is also one of triumph, testifying to the power of collective humanity to foster peace through reconciliation and historical lessons that other nations can learn from. Peace-building begins with the courage to listen.

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Youth, Education, and Peace

ALIJAH COBERLY

Could the world ever experience true peace? Many throughout history have asked this question, and thus, many have attempted to answer it. The world is full of a diverse array of cultures, peoples, worldviews, and backgrounds, and reconciling these has been a challenge. However, the modern day has shown that peace through many venues is not only supported in theory but possibly achievable in practice. Education, and by extension its primary clients: youth, are of special importance due to the role of youth as inheritors of the future, one of the main demographics from which violence can spring, and education's ability to shape this group productively.

Education can facilitate dialogue. Dialogue can be defined in a myriad of ways, from simple conversation to a specific sort of exchange, however among the plethora of definitions, one by Merriam-Webster sticks out to me as of particular significance: "a discussion between representatives of parties to a conflict that is aimed at resolution" (Merriam-Webster). This sort of dialogue can be seen in many places across history. For instance, at the end of World War II, one of the cornerstones of modern international politics was formed: the United Nations. In the early to mid-40s, during the height and end of WWII, many nations of the world were in dire straits. The Axis powers dominated most of the Eurasian region and were pressing outwards from there to spread their influence further. Thus, many states that existed before the invasion were occupied, and many of their governments fled the area. In Europe, many of those governments-in-exile fled

to the largest relatively secure bastion of existence in the area: Great Britain, and more specifically London (Preparatory Years).

Thus, before the UN a declaration was signed that encapsulates all the things the UN stands for, and what productive dialogue out to be, in London by Britain, her colonies, and these governments in exile known as the Declaration of St. James Place which asserted: "That the only true basis of enduring peace is the willing co-operation of free peoples in a world in which, relieved of the menace of aggression, all may enjoy economic and social security; and that they intend to work together, and with other free peoples, both in war and peace to this end" (Preparatory Years). This document was inspirational to the eventual founding of the UN.

Today, the UN is an example of what cooperation can achieve internationally. Nations from across the world, including those oftentimes adversarial to each other in other contexts such as the United States of America and the People's Republic of China. The UN has been pivotal in its role as a forum for promoting human rights via the UN Council on Human Rights and international human rights law arbitration. The UN recognizes many factors that improve the well-being of international peace, and one of those factors is the aforementioned education. Education is a tool for shaping people into the best versions of themselves and for making them more productive in many senses. Beyond the immediate benefit of simply being a more informed person, education, especially forms of

formal higher education, has an array of benefits which can lead to more peaceful outcomes and a better world overall.

According to one study by Jian Li and Co., segments of the population with higher education led to a higher-quality workforce and increased GDP growth up to a certain point (Li et al. How popularising). Countries with higher GDP growth tend to have more peaceful societies than those with less peace as measured by the Institute for Economics and Peace (Positive peace report - vision of Humanity). Thus, education can lead to more prosperous societies with less inclination for violence, and more space for intercultural and interfaith dialogue. According to a study in Indonesia, higher economic status and income correlated with a higher self-described religious tolerance level (Yusuf et al. On socio-economic).

However, merely putting a school in an area of poverty and conflict alone does not constitute an effective wielding of education as a venue for peace. While education worldwide has increased since the latter 1990s, global conflict has not decreased but increased (Nesterova et al. The purposes). Education must be of a certain level of quality and promote critical thinking, openness, and inclusivity to have any sort of effect on peacefulness within a nation (Nesterova et al. The purposes). For instance, a school with enough support in a problematic area to be able to keep students in a safe and controlled classroom environment can give students nutrition if it isn't readily available elsewhere, and just as

importantly, deny access to the students for recruitment by armed groups and others with less-than-peaceful intent (Nesterova et al. The purposes). Young men are often considered historically and statistically the largest source of rebellious action in a society, therefore providing them an alternative environment to the recruitment-heavy streets is a form of societal preventative medicine (Nesterova et al. The purposes). Establishing quality education in a region can also signal to its population that their government does indeed care for them, and promote trust in it and other institutions that might otherwise be targeted for distrust and vectors of conflict fomentation (Nesterova et al. The purposes).

 Education must, as stated before, be inclusive to be functional as an avenue of peace. Throughout history, education has often been used to reinforce structures that have led to social discontent. For instance, when educational outcomes can be at all tied to one's identities such as ethnic, religious, linguistic, or otherwise, then conflict becomes a safe prediction (Nesterova et al. The purposes). For instance, in Bosnia-Herzegovina in the 1990s, separate school systems were established along ethnic lines, therefore Serbians, Croatians, and Bosnians were not placed in environments where cultural dialogue and peace construction could occur, alongside being much more expensive than simply integrating these systems (Nesterova et al. The purposes). This can go even further, as education can be used to further hateful lines. For instance, if the education system is constructed to demonize a minority or enforce some sort of ideological harmony based on exclusion, then naturally students will begin to incorporate these ideas into

their thinking or become more interested in violent resistance if they happen to be on the wrong end of the rhetoric being discussed (Nesterova et al. The purposes).

The purpose of these outwardly negative examples and lines of thought is to show what must be avoided in using education as a vector for proliferating peace. While this essay could have focused more on other topics, my firm belief stands that if the world is to get more peaceful, then education and organizations such as the UN are the first steps. Both serve as forums for people from diverse backgrounds to meet on neutral ground and learn from each other, both are institutions that developed over time into their modern, possibly peace-building forms out of the long and oftentimes still-living history of conflict and inequality that has plagued our society. Education stands as the ground wherein young folks can be taught ways to not repeat the mistakes of their forefathers, to become leaders in the quest for a more peaceful world and a space where they can begin to take their first collective and individual actions as agents for peace. Thus, both imply the centering of youth as a fulcrum for preventing violence.

The aforementioned UN itself recognizes the role that youth play in promoting a peaceful world. For instance, in 2015, the UN passed Resolution 2250, which created the Youth, Peace, and Security Agenda (*Youth, peace and security*). This agenda has five pillars: Participation, Prevention, Partnerships, Disengagement, and Reintegration (*Security Council resolution 2250 (2015)*). Participation can be summarized as a call to increase the

participation of youth in member states decision-making processes (Security Council resolution 2250 (2015)). Partnerships urge member states to work with both the UN and more local bodies to counteract violent actors and propaganda that can recruit and use youth for less-than-peaceful purposes (Security Council resolution 2250 (2015)). Protection is a reiteration that all parties involved in the conflict should take measures to obey rules of warfare and combat such as the Geneva Convention alongside such measures as ensuring the prevention of sexual violence during conflicts (Security Council resolution 2250 (2015)). Disengagement and Reintegration were grouped under the general motif of encouraging areas that are winding down and ending their violence to include youth and youth needs in the reconstruction of their societies (Security Council resolution 2250 (2015)).

 The existence of this Agenda shows that the UN, the premiere body today dedicated to peacebuilding since its inception, understands the deeply critical role of youth in building that peace. This article, beyond its five measures, outlines what was understood before, today there is more youth than ever before, with many nations even having a majority-youth population (Security Council resolution 2250 (2015)). As such, it is of incredible importance to recognize and center their needs and their understanding of the world. Often, due to cultural, legal, or other reasons, youth are maligned or overlooked when building peace or considering the future of the world beyond the truism of throwing them into schools and "hoping for the best". While this essay and others understand the critical role of

education, Agendas such as this show how much deeper the problems and solutions must be.

Peace on Earth is a commonly-cited example of an "empty and lofty goal" given in places such as pageants or when someone were to express a bland, if unobjectable opinion. However, myself and others do truly believe it to be possible. The foundation of the UN is an example that, at least on paper, the majority of nations desire peace. The resolutions for youth, alongside the data I found and expounded on, show how the goal of peace oftentimes hinges on my demographic: youth. It hinges on our ability to effectively reach them, to teach them, and to prevent them from going down paths that have, in the past, led to the world becoming a worse place overall.

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Reframing Peacebuilding

KATELYN PARKER

Conflict has become a part of our everyday lives through constant access to news updates, creating the necessity and desire for conversations about peace. For these conversations to spur peacebuilding efforts, we must reframe our perceptions of peace. Reframing means changing our mindsets, and how we view and think about peacebuilding. Reframing our perceptions requires changing how we think about building peace, our expectations about peacebuilding outcomes, our ideas of potential solutions, and how we approach fostering peace. This essay will look closer at these elements of reframing perceptions of peace.

Reframing How We Think

To have effective peace discussions, we must start thinking that peace is possible on any scale. How many times have peace talks been stifled because peace was deemed impossible? If the narrative surrounding peace is that it is impossible or unattainable, that is how we will approach it. However, once we believe peace can be achieved and maintained and treat peace talks as such, we will create new pathways for peace to flourish. Having negative perceptions about peace takes away the motivation and drive for peaceful solutions while changing that mindset creates a stronger desire to talk about peace and discover practical solutions.

Those who promote "world peace" are often seen as idealistic for overlooking all the conflicts in the world that seem to have no potential peaceful solutions. There are many challenges to peacebuilding and the concept of

"world peace" sounds laughable and implausible. While this may be true, should that stop us from trying to achieve peace? Any positive effort made towards "world peace" is not wasted, a little bit of peace will always be better than no peace.

There are many conflicts where there are seemingly no peaceful solutions. The history of the Israel-Palestinian conflict is often considered to be thousands of years old. As a result, many believe that a peaceful solution may never be found, as there are centuries of conflict to smooth over. This type of thinking does not foster an environment for discovering peace solutions but rather hinders them. The first step to peace discussions is the belief and hope that there are solutions and that peace is possible.

Reframing Expectations

Peace means different things to different people in different places. Managing expectations regarding the outcomes of peacebuilding solutions is an important part of reframing peace, as everyone has different expectations. Knowing what kind of peace and on what scale needs to be achieved is necessary during peace talks to determine the goal. There are two different types of peace: positive and negative peace. Negative peace is the absence of physical violence or conflict, while positive peace is the absence of structural violence or the presence of necessary human rights and needs. Knowing if the current goal is to end a conflict or create a more lasting-sustainable peace changes our approach to potential peacebuilding

solutions. The latter requires more focus on solving the root of the conflict rather than a temporary solution. Both approaches are useful in different scenarios, but usually, positive peace builds upon negative peace. It is important to define what is truly meant by having peace so there is no disappointment or feeling of failure when negative peace is met but not positive peace.

Another expectation to set is the desired scale of peace solutions. Conflict exists on many different scales: interpersonal, in communities, interstate, and international. Recognizing what scale to apply certain peacebuilding solutions to is crucial to creating specific plans. Building peace on one scale may require peace at a different scale or even lead to peace on other scales. It is necessary to recognize what other scales are influencing the target scale to find long-lasting solutions. It is also important to manage expectations about how building peace on one scale will affect the others. Expecting large changes from small-scale peacebuilding efforts may lead to discouragement and feeling overwhelmed. Peacebuilding efforts are needed on all scales, but it is necessary to reframe our expectations to the different scales of peace we are trying to achieve.

Reframing Peace Solutions

Reframing potential peacebuilding tactics will open the door for new, innovative, and creative solutions to conflicts. Too often, peace talks are constrained by our mindsets, what we think we know about the conflict, and

what tactics have been used in the past. Many solutions are only "band-aid" fixes that do not solve the underlying problems. One solution to this is what is called "Moral Imagination." Moral imagination requires looking at a conflict from all sides, considering the history of a conflict, different factors that influence a conflict, and different consequences for potential peacebuilding tactics. Moral imagination encourages outside-of-the-box thinking necessary for finding solutions to the root causes of conflicts.

In the book Dangerous Love, Chad Ford introduces another tactic for looking at peacebuilding in a different light: turning first. Ford writes about the importance of recognizing our influence in a conflict and focusing on what we can change instead of what we want. His turn-first tactic is that we must first show that we are open to peaceful solutions by taking the first step toward peace, even if it leaves us vulnerable. This tactic can be frightening and requires a lot of courage, but it ultimately demonstrates trust in the other side and a willingness to change. If we truly want peace, we must risk being vulnerable and reframe our mindset from what we want from the other party to what we can do to foster peace.

Building peace requires creative solutions and being willing to try solutions that could be ineffective. One example of risk-taking in peacebuilding is the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa after the apartheid. Although this approach is controversial and opinions vary on its effectiveness, other peacebuilding solutions, such as post-genocide Rwanda, have implemented tactics from South Africa. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission offered

amnesty to those who had participated in human rights violations during the apartheid if they revealed details about what they had done. This helped the families of victims to find closure in knowing what happened to their loved ones but was controversial for not delivering justice to the perpetrators of crimes. This approach was different from previous peacebuilding tactics and showed the penitential for creative solutions. Even though this method was controversial, it was successful in showing how this approach can work and in what ways it doesn't.

Northern Ireland is another example of creative peacebuilding solutions. Original attempts at peaceful solutions after the Troubles were not as effective as planned, such as building peace walls to separate the contesting communities. Some of the tactics were taken from other regions where they had been effective. Northern Ireland has had to adapt and create more location-specific plans for peace. While peace efforts are still ongoing, Northern Ireland has implemented creative strategies such as integrating schools while children are young to create relationships between different communities.

Reframing How We Act
The last component for reframing perceptions of peace is changing our actions towards peacebuilding. Peacebuilding can be seen as an overwhelming task with so many conflicts happening worldwide and at different scales. Knowing where to start or where we fit into the larger picture can be daunting. How much difference can one person make in a world full of conflict? This discouraging thought may keep us from taking any action.

Assuming that other people are doing enough peacebuilding also keeps us from being a part of solutions. Instead, we should look at what we can do and view any step towards peace, no matter how small, as a success. If everyone in the world focused on what they could do in their relationships or communities to foster peace, there would be more progress toward peace on all scales. However, this scenario is highly unlikely, but we should be encouraging more dialogues about peace to grow a larger community of peacebuilders. We need to start thinking we can make a difference, and we will.

Conclusion
There is a great need for peaceful solutions and dialogues. To achieve this, we must change our perceptions about peace. If we tell ourselves peace isn't possible, it won't be. However, if we believe peace can be achieved, we will work to make it so. By changing how we think about peace we change our approach, which is necessary for finding specific and creative solutions. We can make a difference in our relationships, communities, and even in the world. Peace is possible.

Dialogue:
Peace Through Negotiation & Compromise

CALEB DEWEY

On September 15, 2001, Balbir Singh Sodhi was working as a landscaper planting flowers outside a gas station in Mesa, Arizona, when a white male drove up, shot, and killed him, then drove to another gas station to fire at a Lebanese man, and then later into the home of an Afghan family. These hate crimes targeted these people because of their looks, and sadly were not unique. It was out of fear due to the events of 9/11 that this man committed these horrific acts of violence. These events make clear the importance of MLK's statement that "Returning hate for hate multiplies hate, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that."

Dialogue is the key to peace. When two parties come together willing to negotiate and listen, they are better able to understand each other and thus achieve the common goal of peace, and their own individual goals as well in the form of compromise. Negotiation, listening, and understanding require compassion and a genuine desire to view the other person as a human being. Situations in which someone does not view the other person as a human being with important needs and desires lead to a superiority complex, a lack of willingness to compromise and negotiate, and further disagreements inevitably arise.

Without dialogue, the opportunity for mutual understanding is relinquished.

"Returning hate for hate multiplies hate, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that."

Martin Luther King Jr.

Without mutual understanding, feelings of confusion, fear, hurt, or disgust can arise and eventually lead to stronger dividing sentiments such as hate. Therefore, without dialogue, there is no peace, no opportunity for mutual understanding, and certainly no compromises made toward a common goal.

There have been many examples of successful dialogue leading to peace, on both the international scale and the individual community scale. International peace-building efforts cannot happen without a willingness to negotiate, engaging in international dialogue with countries of opposing ideologies and agendas. The Cold War is replete with examples of this, which eventually led to its resolution and greater peace. For example, various nuclear treaties were made, limiting the extremely destructive possibilities of WMDs, ensuring greater safety for the whole globe's population and environment.

The Strategic Arms Limitations Talks/Treaties of 1972 and 1979 were impossible without the willingness of both the United States and the USSR to engage in mutual dialogue. Both

recognized the real danger of Mutually Assured Destruction and were pressured by their citizens and other nations into reducing such a devastating possibility. The two sides had opposing goals for the future, one advocating the spread of capitalism, the other communism. However, they focused on the common goal of safety, preventing nuclear war and Mutually Assured Destruction.

These talks resulted in reducing the likelihood of global thermonuclear war, thereby increasing the prospect for a safe future, proving the effectiveness of dialogue in peacemaking and building a better future.

Yet another proof of successful dialogue was the Camp David Accords of 1978. These accords, although they didn't solve every problem facing the involved parties—Egypt and Israel—paved the way for mutual respect and recognition between the two countries, leading to greater regional peace, preventing further wars between the two countries even to this day.

Even those who are of diametrically opposing political parties, religions, or

cultures can focus on the human nature of everyone in the world. Jeff Flake, former ambassador to Turkey, Representative of Arizona, and Senator, and author of the book Conscience of a Conservative, says that "True leadership is listening to others and working to find solutions that serve everyone, not just our tribe." Flake laments the loss of civility in U.S. politics between the two parties. He has supported Democratic presidential and vice-presidential candidates because he values character over partisanship.

In America, some of our shared goals are defined in the Declaration of Independence as "Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." It is appropriate to extend these common goals to every individual in the world. We must openly acknowledge that although we have different specific ideologies and methods for achieving these goals, we can still work together and make compromises.

Compromise is possible because we view each other's lives and goals as important. In each of the prior examples, giving up certain resources or goals in exchange for others was necessary to create mutually beneficial agreements. These agreements created a future of peace, security, and mutual respect. In the Camp David Accords, Israel agreed to return land to Egypt in exchange for Egypt's recognition of Israel's legitimacy. In the SALT Talks, each side gave up missiles that they saw as a protective measure.

The United States was built on compromise. The Articles of Confederation needed a stronger centralizing document establishing future norms, rules, and rights for every American. Thus began the process of creating the Constitution, the amendments, and the Bill of Rights. Just one example was the Connecticut Compromise. Larger states in the early U.S. favored representation based on population, while smaller states favored equal representation for every state. To compromise and allow both groups their goals, a bicameral legislature was created, with the House based on population and the Senate based on equal representation.

Efforts for dialogue, though full of potential benefit, do not come without obstacles. In our day and age, social media has created an atmosphere of fear and polarization due to the money-making agendas and algorithms of those that control it. These self-serving companies have learned that the things most likely to keep users online for longer are the things that will feed the user's own current beliefs, especially the ones that generate passionate emotions, including hate and fear. Thus social media, which could be a great medium for dialogue, instead becomes one of the greatest challenges toward mutual understanding.

The public must hold those in control of social media accountable for their actions in polarizing the world for the sake of self-profit. On a large scale, lawsuits can be made. On a more individual scale, new entrepreneurs can invent healthier forms of social media, and individual users can commit to avoiding polarizing platforms such as Facebook or X, engaging in direct and individual dialogue through other means such as video or phone calls, as well as text and email.

These self-serving intentions are present anywhere an agenda is found, and are dangerous when that goal or agenda does not directly have to do with mutual understanding, dialogue, and greater world peace. Governments, corporations, and associations have all been a culprit of this self-serving mindset.

Further difficulties arise with the mindsets of each individual, based on the culture of openness or lack thereof that they may be used to. Mark Twain said the following on the effects of exploration: "Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness, and many of our people need it sorely on these accounts. Broad, wholesome, charitable views of men and things cannot be acquired by vegetating in one little corner of the earth all one's lifetime" (The Innocents Abroad / Roughing It).

If the extent of willingness for dialogue and mutual understanding with those who are different frequently depends on the culture of openness one is used to, then the greatest opportunity for cultivating dialogue is at a young age, especially in the context of high school and collegiate education. The purpose of education, especially at a college level, is to expand our understanding of the world, even when that includes encountering information or narratives contrary to our current viewpoints. This allows us the opportunity for engaging with others in a safe learning environment, free from judgment. Contrary views don't mean we need to change ours or accept another person's; it might just mean we view them as more intelligent, virtuous, and compassionate.

Opportunities for dialogue exist within our current religious and political communities, as long as we exercise virtues such as patience, compassion, and humility.

Civil service organizations, including churches, mosques, other houses of worship, and educational institutions such as universities, can participate in dialogue by encouraging those who attend and participate in such organizations to branch out and meet others, using their own spaces to provide opportunities for worship, activism, or the spread of differing viewpoints. For two years, BYU has been hosting an annual Ramadan Iftar meal. This is significant because BYU is a predominantly Latter-day Saint, Christian university, with only a very small Muslim minority. Many BYU tudents come from cities in Utah that significantly lack diversity from an

sIslamic background, so this Ramadan event is an excellent example of success using opportunities for interfaith events.

The Utah Islamic Center was a venue for voting in the 2020 elections, another example of successful outreach beyond the building's original religious purposes. This and other Muslim communities in Utah have been the recipient of large donations for the sake of building Islamic worship locations.

The following principles of dialogue can be taught and practiced in schools, working towards the worldwide common goals of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

summer camps, library forums and lectures, and universities: compassionate listening, non-defensiveness, neutrality, patience, humility, and curiosity. It is inevitable that youth will become interested in the events they hear their parents speaking about, but what depends on their choices is what ideas and dialogue they choose to expose themselves to.

In conclusion, dialogue leads to mutual respect, which allows for recognition of common goals. This in turn enables compromise through negotiation, surmounting even the most overwhelming obstacles. Creating a culture of dialogue is essential to

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Peace through
Connection and Understanding

DALLON GUNN

One of the greatest failures in the story of civilization is the absence of lasting peace. Wars and genocides, hate and pain, have beaten out the winding road of history for eons. And yet, for thousands of years we have searched for peace. Philosophers, politicians, and prophets have all pored over this enigma, but generation after generation we inherit a legacy of division rather than unity. No formula devised by economists or mathematicians has brought an end to this cycle of hurt and suffering, but still we search on. Some might hope to one day find such a panacea, but the truth is there is not a simple solution to establishing lasting peace. Conflict will continue to resurface despite our efforts to exterminate it. However this does not mean that we should resign ourselves to the endless waves of contempt. We must pursue peace with a relentless hope in mankind, while recognizing that there is no easy fix for such a complex issue. Rather, each effort we make lays the groundwork for a future that is able to adapt to and overcome the conflict that has always accompanied the vast diversity of human experience. Two principles will be guiding points for understanding the many factors that influence effective conflict resolution; connection and understanding. As peace grows from a bond between contenders to an international shift in behavior, these principles remain integral in creating peace that defies history.

Dialogue:
The Starting Point of Peace

Durable peace begins with a personal connection between people of differing backgrounds. Each person is a unique combination of opinions, personality traits, experiences, and values. However these differences do not hold equal weight. When someone's skills, abilities or personality traits do not match our own, we can still understand and identify with them, but we have a much harder time reconciling conflicting values (Ramírez 70). Because our values lie at the core of who we are and why we do what we do, it can be difficult to accept those who do not fit within our moral framework. Throughout history people have leveraged the cultural value gap to dehumanize ethnic groups that do not match their own. This results in a blindness to the potential connection points that contenders might otherwise find, which allows people to justify cruelty that would never be accepted among members of their own group. To see beyond this inflated animosity, they must see themselves in their opponents.

Dialogue can be a catalyst in this process because it allows people to appreciate the hopes, struggles, and experiences of another human being. As they do so, they can no longer view that person as an unknown, inhuman enemy. They begin to see a life that is not so different from their own, and their trust in that person and others increases (Svensson 571). This is the beginning of establishing a connection between

parties with opposing values. As they converse, their understanding of each other increases and they are able to comprehend a new perspective on the world.

The journey of building connections and broadening understanding begins long before a crisis arises. It must be sown into the soil of our communities so that generations can grow up with the skills to forge peace through dialogue. Education is crucial in fostering these abilities at the most impactful point of someone's life. Youths who learn how to build and strengthen peace become agents of change. As they learn alternatives to violence and bullying, they build cultures of love and respect from the ground up. They view themselves as peacemakers capable of solving the conflicts in their communities (Georgakopoulos et al. 16). We must help children and young adults to expand their understanding of different cultures and values, and to reach out to others outside of their familiar groups. The time and energy we devote to these efforts will develop into lifetimes of positive change.

Peace at the Community Level

Although the change we are looking for must always be rooted in person to person connection, there are many times when larger organizations can play a pivotal role in promoting peace. Religion has the power to be both a roadblock in the path to peace and a gateway to stronger bonds between groups.

Because religious beliefs are strongly interconnected with the values of a culture, they can cause conflict when people believe their religious views are not compatible with the views of other denominations. In 1992, religious conflicts between Christians and Muslims in Kaduna, Nigeria claimed over two thousand lives and left a bitter divide between members of these religions. This devastation is yet one example of thousands of religious clashes around the world. It may seem that involving faith amplifies the tension in politically fragile areas, but the solution to these problems may come from harnessing the positive power of religion.

Following the devastation in Kaduna, Pastor James Wuye and Imam Muhammad Ashafa worked together to create the Interfaith Mediation Center, an organization that promotes peaceful collaboration between Muslims and Christians. Originally, both had fought against each other in 1992, but instead of harboring vengeance they rose above perceived cultural differences and united on a principle common to both religions: peace. Their organization successfully negotiated peace in the Yelwa-Shendam area that has lasted for over 12 years ("Nigeria's Imam and Pastor"). Uniting through religion can create long-lasting peace precisely because it is a core part of many people's values. Though religious traditions may vary, many share a common goal
 of peace. Consequently, when people see peace-making as a way to express their devotion, they become active, involved, and motivated by a higher cause (qtd. in Hayward 5). What was once a barrier becomes a bridge.

Local leaders, whether they are religious, educational, or otherwise, can greatly influence the sentiments of their communities, so they must be intimately connected with the peace-building process. While values may be inherent to a culture or philosophy, leaders often shape the way people express their beliefs, and whether or not they view the actions of other groups as consistent with their moral framework. When leaders of conflicting groups choose to come together despite differences, they pattern an attitude of open mindedness that can spread to the larger community. The involvement of these key figures can make the difference between peace-building efforts that resolve underlying issues and those that are merely superficial. However, interactions between public figures must be accompanied by individual connections between members of the groups they represent, or they run the risk of becoming displays of good will devoid of real intent.

Peace Around the World

As separate communities in various parts of the world work to achieve peace in their respective areas, the knowledge they gain can be invaluable for those in similar circumstances. If we all learn to share what insights we discover, the fruit of our efforts can increase exponentially. However, we must approach international involvement with caution, since outsiders risk making the same mistakes as those involved in the dispute: dismissing personal connection and limiting understanding. It is too easy to see a new situation as merely a repeat of old problems rather than a unique combination of personal struggles and distinct cultural variation. By rushing in and attempting to solve a problem they don't understand, foreign

actors risk worsening a situation they might have helped.

Many peacebuilding efforts dismiss the importance of cultural and religious factors. They forgo involvement with local leaders and even those who are affected by the situation. Even efforts to provide aid to those who have been harmed can go astray when outsiders do not take the time to understand local values and customs. Rather than helping people in the area to reach their own ideals of peace and reconciliation, they impose their own solutions to problems that may not be relevant or helpful (Duffey 155). Efforts to bring peace must first involve an increase in understanding. Dialogue is an essential tool in unveiling the complexities of a conflict. As personal experiences replace assumptions, personalized solutions based on individual needs can align the efforts of all parties involved. There is no second-hand, disconnected way to bring peace to the world. Only through one-on-one connections can individual solutions become a broader transformation.

The power of these peace-building efforts comes as people change their perspective on what they are fighting for. Rather than viewing themselves as competitors battling head to head for their survival, they begin to see themselves as working side by side, each benefiting from the successes of the other. This creates a state of interdependence, a special type of connection that not only brings peace but a greater prosperity than could ever be achieved alone. On the global scale, trade increases the economic prosperity of both countries involved and decreases the likelihood of armed conflict between the

two (Lee and Pyun 342). These relationships can strengthen the bond of peace between otherwise disconnected areas of the world.

Exchange of goods, skills, and knowledge is the beginning of a more permanent type of cooperation. While "negative peace" is merely the cessation of violence, "positive peace" is characterized by fundamental changes in society that make peace sustainable (Autesserre 115). Such a change is only possible when people consistently assess the state of affairs in their area and re-evaluate how to improve the situation, even when no immediate problems presents itself. Through this process of reflection and correction we can adapt to an ever-changing future of unforeseen challenges. Additionally this means that even those who do not live in actively contentious areas can further the cause of peace. We all must look inside ourselves and to the communities around us to see what can be done to bring disparate peoples together. By building connections with people outside our normal circles and seeking to understand those who are different from us we strengthen the conditions of positive peace around us.

Each effort we make towards building peace that does not erode with time is a step closer to the impossible. The factors that influence conflict resolution may seem limitless and overwhelming. However, as we focus on strengthening connections and broadening our understanding, learning from each victory and setback, we may find that the impossible is merely the unprecedented. Our personal commitment to the improvement of the societies we live in can accelerate our progress towards the future we hope to create.

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The Paradox of Tolerance
As Related to Cross Cultural Understanding

BENNETT WINEGAR

The notion of the "end times" being near is a common phenomenon that no generation or civilization can claim to be innocent of. From writings dating back thousands of years claiming the end is near to modern suspicions, such fears are something that identify human culture. Likewise, a common trend seen between the young and the old over many cultures is the notion that the younger generations are profoundly lacking in wisdom and intuition and are therefore more likely to sow the seeds of misunderstanding and discontent. To claim that our world today is inherently more polarized or on such a blatant and unnuanced path to unpeacefulness would be to fall into the exact same trap as many generations looking upon their young with concern. The world is no stranger to violence and hate propagated by humans, and we cannot make the claim that we simply live in a less peaceful world than ever before. However, we can make the claim that developments like social media and instant communication have profited on existing starting points of division which typically include differences like religion, culture, and values, and have allowed rapid division and polarization between such groups at a rate never seen before. We see many historical examples of groups being willing to engage in forms of diplomacy even if such efforts ended up failing and paving the way for deeper conflict. Today, however, we see massive division between people and groups (often with roots in cultural misunderstandings) that have had little to zero real interaction with the "other." Hate can be one of the most effective

way to unite a group, and recently developed media has gripped on to this opportunity because of its ability to bring people together under similar and often irrational notions of the "other".

This ever-increasing division of people from different backgrounds has led to a serious need for further discussion on how effective mediums of cross cultural and interfaith dialogue can be promoted to allow people to remain united despite differing views by promoting education on tolerance of individuals, and the respect deserved of all human beings. Through this paper, I claim that tolerance is a trait portrayed between humans as an acknowledgement of the respect that fellow human beings are deserved in realizing a global unification of mankind despite differences, and not the forced acceptance of all ideas different from our own as equal or worthy of respect. In addition, I claim that the paradox of tolerance as defined by Karl Popper (114) states that full tolerance of all ideas in a society is unsustainable, as a purely tolerant society that doesn't allow the criticism or challenging of new ideas in the name of mutual understanding unknowingly propagates intolerance in the face of these unchallenged ideas. Furthermore, I argue that efforts today to encourage tolerance between cultures and ideas to foster peace is unwise and ineffective, as individual humans will unavoidably disagree on aspects of culture and ideas, and by forcing acceptance of all ideas in the name of peace, we encounter the paradox of tolerance. I argue, however, that while efforts of

cultural and ideological tolerance between all ideas is unsustainable and should not be the focus of peace building in our world, our human connections go much deeper than our cultural and ideological misunderstandings and can therefore be the foundation for peace building and understanding. Simply put, the definition of tolerance should be shifted from tolerance of ideas to tolerance of individuals as fellow human beings born with the right to be respected and seen as equal regardless of ideas. When this comes to cross cultural understanding, it means simply that even when multiple groups or individuals have disagreeing views or beliefs, they must be required to understand their duty to treat each other with the respect deserved as fellow human beings. It does not mean, however, that they need to treat ideas and perceptions held by the other as something worthy of their acceptance.

Before turning to the implementation of my statements, we must first discuss what has made this realization possible and what has led us to the point of being able to have these discussions under freedom of speech. The most important development in our world allowing for all points of view to be granted the chance for consideration and respect is freedom of speech under democracy. Kofi Annan, in his Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech makes a similar statement: "This [ability to continue with discussive and challenging dialogue] will not be possible, however, without freedom of religion, of expression, of assembly, and

basic equality under the law. Indeed, the lesson of the past century has been that where the dignity of the individual has been trampled or threatened – where citizens have not enjoyed the basic right to choose their government, or the right to change it regularly – conflict has too often followed, with innocent civilians paying the price, in lives cut short and communities destroyed." (Annan). This quote clearly sums up the notion that further discussion of how issues between ideas and culture should be solved cannot be examined in any meaningful manner without the successful implementation of freedom of speech in a democratic environment, and that efforts in the future must continue under such societies.

To put the notion that ideas in society and between cultures don't necessarily merit tolerance into perspective, we turn to a common Hindu practice that, despite being abolished, continues to occur and has been seen for centuries in Indian society. The practice is known as Sati and occurs when a Hindu woman throws herself onto the funeral pyre of her deceased husband. This practice has remained unchallenged for most of its existence and has been justified by Vedic texts while causing the premature deaths of countless women. Indian Raja Ram Mohan
Roy was one of the first to propose an end to this practice. Raja Ram Mohan Roy was of a diverse religious and linguistic background, speaking Persian, Sanskrit, Bengali, as well as studying the Hindu teachings of his background and monotheistic ideals including Islam and Christianity. He advocated for many of the humanist attributes of Christianity and monotheistic ideals of Islam while promoting the Hindu identity and teachings and ridding it of several

unethical practices, notably Sati and child marriage which was abolished in 1829 (Soman 76). The ideals promoted by the Raja in ridding the Hindu communities of this unethical practice is an in-depth example of tolerance extending to individuals but not necessarily the ideas held by these individuals and how dialogue and freedom to note concerns is critical in revealing flaws presented by some ideas. By being exposed to a diverse array of cultural views and practices, he was able to judge a practice promoted by his people as morally wrong while also continuing to embrace the importance of his people's Hindu identity and the importance it played in people's individual identities. This example shows the role dialogue, freedom of speech, and understanding play in the ability to discern practices as not worthy of tolerance while still seeing the importance of identity. This example also succeeds in showing how immoral ideas portrayed by certain people and groups do not merit the criticism or discrimination of the individuals but rather the increased push for critical dialogue and discussion directed towards the supporters in an effort to bring clarity to minds. Today, this practice of Sati has dramatically decreased despite continued participation of people in the Hindu faith, showing clear evidence of the continuation of cultural identity despite reforms to unethical practices and the success of simple criticism of ideas instead of criticism of individuals.

As claimed previously, pushing for tolerance of all ideas as equal is an unsteady foundation for peace among cultures and beliefs. When efforts like this inevitably fail, they lead to tensions between groups, cultures, and beliefs

and recent media has capitalized on this. In addition to media promoting the idea of the "other" when tensions arise, we see common attempts by them pushing for the immediate conglomeration of ideas deemed as "bad" with the individuals belonging to these ideas, allowing for groups with differing ideas and beliefs to see the other's identity as inseparable from their ideas or beliefs. Tolerance of differing cultural values is crucial in understanding people originating from different backgrounds, but tolerance of ideas does have limits, and because of this, we must be ready to separate individuals from their ideas. Unfortunately, purely tolerant behavior towards all ideas is unsustainable, as those who are tolerant towards all ideals and promote them in the name of understanding are doomed to be overwhelmed. We have developed the notion in recent decades that the answer to cross cultural understanding and interfaith dialogue and peace is simple tolerance and acceptance of all ideas different than our own. Most groups from differing backgrounds do not desire conflict and want simply to obtain mutual understanding despite differences. However, this is not the case with all groups and individuals. When parties and individuals of differing backgrounds and understandings hold the common belief of tolerance based on respect deserved by everyone regardless of background, or if both groups hold common goals allowing them to overlook differences, prospects like tolerance of different cultures and beliefs are all worthy responses to forging peace through dialogue. However, it is seldom discussed what is to be done when the belief of tolerance of individuals as fellow human beings regardless of beliefs or background is

not a commonly held value between parties, and ideals do not agree. When people assume that everyone holds their same beliefs on tolerance and freedom of speech, they subject themselves to the danger of being dominated by those who don't hold such beliefs.

Any reader of sound logic might come to several critical conclusions on the interpretations of the paradox of intolerance as being unethical in promoting suppression of free speech. Indeed, many notable philosophers such as Plato made such remarks in support of anti democratic forms of government by saying that bad and unethical ideas promoted by the people must necessarily be suppressed by a strong government to prevent the erosion of morals in a society, effectively eliminating freedom of speech. An interpretation of these views of Plato put forward by Karl Popper in his book titled The Open Society and its Enemies shows his perspective and how the interpretation of this theory can be interpreted by some to support suppression of speech. "The free man, Plato suggests, may exercise his absolute freedom, first by defying the laws and ultimately by defying freedom itself and by clamoring for a tyrant. This is not just a far-fetched possibility; it has happened a number of times; and every time it has happened, it has put in a hopeless intellectual position all those democrats who adopt, as the ultimate basis of their political creed, the principle of the majority rule or a similar form of the principle of sovereignty" (Popper). It should not be that speech is necessarily suppressed to avoid counter democratic or expressive values as expressed by Plato. However, in order to steer way clear of scenarios where counter democratic values are the will of

the people by force, it should be the role of the state to ensure the propagation of values allowing for the open challenges of any ideas. The largest problem with our new and flimsy ways of promoting diversity is that it often includes the notion of not challenging ideas from others to avoid misunderstanding and avoiding dialogue to sift the bad ideas from the good. To further on my notion that modern tolerance of ideas and cultures dissimilar or sometimes disagreeable to our own is an unwise foundation for peace, we look at a quote by Edward Langerak in his book Civil Disagreement "Sometimes talking with each other will reveal common ground, but often we will simply become clearer about our disagreements and our lack of prospects for consensus. It is true that "tolerant" is sometimes used to describe a person or a society that gladly accepts differences, but I think clarity is enhanced if we use it simply to describe a person or society that is disposed toward tolerating what is disagreeable" (85). The simple definition of "tolerance" as stated by this has in fact been altered to fit a new and loose meaning where cultural and ideological differences are something to be celebrated and promoted instead of something disagreeable that must be endured in the true sense of the word. While cultural differences in a bilateral society can often be a point worth celebrating, we return to the notion that there will always be disagreements between ideas and cultures of humans, and while societies of multiculturalism can and often are successful, history shows us that these differences take a great deal of effort to co exist in lasting peace, especially when disagreements arise, as this is shown in the traditional meaning of the word 'tolerance.'

A serious limitation to the notion of propagating tolerance of individuals instead of ideas and culture is that it too is subject to the requirement of both parties being of accordance in order for such efforts to function. As I have already put forth by stating disagreement of ideas and not intolerance of individuals, we should never hate or isolate those who don't believe in tolerance and cross-cultural understanding for those different than themselves, or even those who don't believe in tolerance of individuals and not necessarily ideas. However, while forging peace between people of different backgrounds is easier when common ground is found in the form of respect deserved by all human beings, sustaining a society where toleration of individuals is the common belief is not sustainable if intolerant ideas/people are propagated according to the paradox of tolerance. Because of this, we must look to education as the worthiest method to propagate the common belief of respect deserved by individuals regardless of background instead of the simple tolerance of all ideas. Popper also claims how education, while possibly being seen as a form of authoritarianism by information control, is the most effective way to implement ideas of tolerance in a society (123). Langerak in his paper then goes on to refute claims of totalitarianism in education by saying, "One can claim that truth is intolerant of error without implying that trying to teach the truth is being intolerant toward another's holding a wrong belief. As long as one uses acceptable pedagogy, one that respects intellectual freedom, it seems counterintuitive to classify teaching as intolerance toward beliefs or believing's." (79). By looking at this, we realize that education and teaching of

this new interpretation of tolerance would not be intolerant towards one's right to believe differently, as education of an idea does not mean suppression of information as long as those being taught are free to question. This gives us the right to assume education as a just and effective method of using tolerance of the individual as a new foundation for peace. In addition, education of this new type of tolerance would extend greatly to international organizations and youth in today's world. In the international realm, organizations charged with humanitarian support as well as cross cultural dialogue could begin teaching this new form of tolerance in efforts of understanding and may find higher success. Youth as well must be looked towards as the newest embodiment of peace and those most likely to internalize new methods of peace. In our world of increased misunderstandings between cultures and ideas, the flaws of tolerance based on willing acceptance of all ideas in the name of understanding become clear. In this, we turn to the notion that we, as individuals all endowed with the right to respect, should see others not as products of their ideas and beliefs, but as fellow human beings. The perspective that I have put forth assumes cultural and ideological misunderstandings as an inevitable part of human nature that no effort will fully rase, whereas mutual respect towards individuals is an effective proxy to mutual understanding, even if disagreement in ideas arises. The paradox of tolerance states that some ideas are better than others and that we must keep intolerant ideas in check preventing them from flourishing and becoming the threat that undermines the very idea of tolerance, however this does not merit the discrimination or hate of individuals belonging to such ideas. Instead of uniting bad ideas and individuals, we must turn to education as the new beacon of tolerance and understanding and allow it to help develop a sustainable approach to tolerance, one that encourages individuals to challenge ideas while respecting fellow humans.

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A Bottom-up Approach to
Sustainable Peacebuilding

GARRETT WRIDE

Throughout history, a learned hate for people different from ourselves has led to conflict. However, as human rights activist Nelson Mandela suggests, humans can learn how to get along with each other. While intergovernmental cooperation and diplomacy is vital for peace, sustainable peace must be achieved through a bottom-up approach. Facilitating change amongst individuals and communities allows change in policy to last. The bottom-up approach or community-based peacebuilding can be carried out in a number of activities including intercommunity dialogue, education, and collaborative problem-solving between communities.

Challenges of International Diplomacy in Peacebulding

There are numerous examples in recent history of the Middle East and Central Asia in which official peace treaties were not enough to create sustainable peace. A very relevant example is that of the Israel-Palestine conflict. In 1993 the Israeli state and the Palestine Liberation Organization agreed on a compromise that is known as the Oslo Accords. They both agreed to respect the existence of two separate states- Palestine and Israel . While the Oslo Accords seems like a great step towards amity, the peace did not last (The Oslo Accords). Why?

Continued feelings of mistrust and unresolved injustices led to individuals actions inside and outside of government that undermined the peace

"No one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite."

Nelson Mandela, Long Walk to Freedom

process. Jewish individuals continued to settle in areas that were agreed to be under Palestinian control. They felt that any palestinian state would produce terrorists that would threaten Israel. Many also still believed in Jewish superiority that made them deserving of the land that holds historical and religious value. In reaction to Israeli encroachment of Palestinian land, Hamas carried out a number of acts of violence. Palestinians that joined Hamas had no confidence in Israelis' upholding the Oslo Accords. As years have past, ultimately the compromise of the Oslo Accords have been disregarded by booth governing powers and individuals (Kimmelman, The Oslo Accords). The Oslo Accords failed because not enough of the people that would be affected by these agreements were ready for peace and cooperation. Peace agreements can only last if people are able to unlearn their hate for one another.

Unlearning hate and learning love is more complex and nuanced than what is assumed by spectators to protracted conflicts. I personally came to understand the complexity of conflict as

I recently participated in field study in Azerbaijan and contested Nagorno-Karabakh. Similar to the conflict between Israel and Palestine, the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia has seen unjust acts of violence on both sides. According to Thomas de Waal, an expert on the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, most of the ethnic killings in the capital cities of Azerbaijan and Armenia were reported to be committed by those refugees who had fled the contested region (De Waal). A government official of Azerbaijan, who took part in hosting us students, allowed us to visit his former hometown of Ağdam. Ağdam was under Armenian control for the last twenty-five years. During that time Armenians purposefully dismantled the city piece by piece, making it inhabitable. One can imagine the pain that would be felt in seeing their hometown demolished.

These experiences have not put the government official in position to be forgiving nor compromising with Armenia and Armenians living in Nagorno-Karabakh. Without a doubt, there are countless mirrored situations in Armenia. These experiences helped

me to understand how difficult it is for populations to find peace when they grew up learning hate and distrust towards another community. Yet, this does not mean that we are without hope. There must be a way forward in protracted conflicts rooted in political, national, ethnical, or religious tensions.

The Role of Grassroots Initiatives in Peacebuilding

Bottom-up or "grassroots" peacebuilding initiatives are measures taken by local actors to build relationships and change attitudes at a community level. An important aspect is that these initiatives should be led by individuals who are directly involved in the conflict. Outside entities like international governments or foreign NGOs can take part in encouraging this sort of peacebuilding and can help with providing structure or resources. However, needs are best met by those who have an intimate, cultural understanding of the concerned populations (Skarlato). As the term "grassroots" suggests, peacebuilding in this bottom-up method allows peace to take root in the society and, in turn, leads the system as a whole to move towards peace. For this reason, grassroots peacebuilding initiatives are becoming more widely accepted as a key factor in the peacebuilding process. There are a number of bottom-up peacebuilding initiatives that I feel are particularly relevant right now.

Intercommunity Dialogue and Peacebuilding

The first strategy is facilitating productive dialogue between the conflicting communities. I first came into contact with this approach while in Azerbaijan. I had the opportunity to hear

from professors at the Institute of Theology in Baku. They described their efforts in peacebuilding with Armenians. This has involved creating spaces for Azerbaijani students at the university to speak with Armenian university students. While these students grew up hearing negative rhetoric about each other, the conflict is less personal to them, and they may have a fresh view for moving forward in peace. However, these students also grew up isolated from one another. Previously, there have been no opportunities to grow personal relationships with individuals from the other side of the conflict. The opportunities that the university provided for the students to meet and discuss their ideas and concerns helped the students to see one another as fellow human beings with common hopes and aspirations. These same students will go on to be influential leaders that will have the opportunity to push the nations closer to peace.

The idea of creating personal relationships can be applied not only to situations of international hostility but also domestic intercommunal tension. At my university I am involved in research seeking to improve the mental health of Syrian refugees living in Türkiye. This has exposed me to relative research on the benefit of intercommunal activities promoted by NGOs. While Turkish and Syrian communities share some cultural and religious values, the two communities have stayed fairly distinct since the influx of Syrian refugees in Türkiye in 2011. Many individuals in each community report to not have any relation with individuals from the other community. Furthermore, many Syrians have faced discrimination from native Turkish residents (Shaw). In order to promote integration and positive

Turkish-Syrian relations, NGOs have facilitated intercommunal activities like, "student clubs, camps for children and the youth, sewing courses, cooking workshops for women, trips, social activities, conferences, meetings, competitions, vocational skills". These activities gave opportunities for Syrian and Turkish individuals to create meaningful relationships with each other. The grassroot NGOs reported general improved views on Syrian refugees (Zihnioğlu). This success reiterates the importance of promoting personal relationships as a method for peacebuilding.

Education and Peacebuilding

The second prominent way to support peace is through proper education, especially education related to opposing groups. Education has the potential to positively or negatively impact the peace process. Educational systems that reinforce inaccurate representations of other communities or that promote false history of a conflict will in turn cause the next generation to continue the status quo conflict. However, proper education can prepare the next generation to be open to new solutions and discourages bias that could be a roadblock to peace in the future (Zasloff). The 'Araz' Scholars' Initiative is a group of Azerbaijani and Armenian academics that came together to discuss how to foster peace through education. The initiative included activities like promoting research to bring accurate information about the conflict to each of the communities (Scholars Frame Armenian-Azerbaijani Conflict). The Araz Scholars' Initiative is one good example of using education for peacebuilding. Another example has been proposed to help with the Israel-Palestine conflict is

establishing a Joint Israeli–Palestinian Education Advisory Committee. The purpose of this committee would be to share concerns and challenges that each community is facing in education and also to further ensure that accurate information is being taught to students. The hope is that this will give accountability to each community's education system and ultimately prepare the population to better accept peace (Zasloff). Combining education with relationships and dialogue through activities like exchange student programs may be an effective way to promote peacebuilding in the rising generation.

Cooperation and Peacebuilding

The third way in which we can facilitate grassroots peacebuilding is by fostering collaboration between the two communities. In other words,

peacebuilders can facilitate situations in which conflicting communities can work together on a common problem. This strategy is interrelated with the first two strategies I discussed. Cooperation and collaboration will both support personal relationships as well as proper education. I already provided examples of implementation of intercommunity dialogue and education that involved collaboration like in the Araz Scholars' Initiative. A relevant issue that has the potential to divide or unite people is that of climate change. There is evidence that "environmental peacebuilding" leads to more sustained peace (Krampe). When people of different ethnicities, religions, nationalities and political opinions work together on a pressing issue like climate change, differences are set aside and people are able to better understand one another. This is especially pertinent in Central Asia and the Middle East where climate change is negatively affecting water and

energy sources. Working together on this critical issue may be the factor that can bring peace to a conflicted and polarized world.

Conclusion

While the idea of "world peace" seems idealist and far reaching, we must trust in the innate ability of human beings to learn to love and relate to one another. We cannot solely rely on international diplomacy to get there. Lasting peace will only be found if we also tap into local, bottom-up peacebuilding initiatives. Intercommunity dialogue, education, and opportunities for collaboration implemented together is a promising place to start. As people in conflict choose to make small efforts to promote peace in their communities, these seemingly small efforts will eventually make the difference to sustainable peace.

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Author Bios

Alexander Keogh
Alexander Keogh studied Psychology, Chinese, and Global Business at Brigham Young University. He is passionate about bridging ideological and cultural gaps to find creative solutions to complex problems. Inspired to energize a generation of peacemakers, his passion led him to co-found The Peacemaker Project at BYU and the National Student Council for Peacemaking with his wife, Mirabella. A Bentonville, Arkansas native, Alexander is the 2023 North American Champion for comprehensive Chinese skills and cherishes friendships with Chinese-speaking friends across the world. Alexander is currently preparing to pursue a PhD in organizational behavior, with research interests focused on reducing political animosity, cross-cultural negotiation, moral psychology, persuasion, and building trust. His ideal Friday night includes walking around BYU campus debating his wife, followed by an episode of The West Wing with some ice cream.

Garrett Wride
Garrett Wride is an undergraduate student entering his senior year at Brigham Young University. He is studying Bioinformatics with minors in Middle East Studies and International Development. After graduation he plans on pursuing a master's in public health with a global health emphasis. Garrett is passionate about advancing health equity for migrants, and believes this can only be accomplished through peaceful, international collaboration.

Kirsten Dewberry
Kirsten Dewberry is a student at Utah State University dual majoring in Political Science and International Studies and pursuing a certificate in Global Peacebuilding. She just began her internship for the Baskerville Institute and received the Boren Scholarship to study in Japan this upcoming academic year. Outside of academia, she volunteers with CAPSA and works for Utah State University.

Caleb Dewey
Caleb is an avid language learner and served a Persian-speaking mission in San Diego as a Latter-day Saint missionary. Caleb and his wife, who met studying Arabic at BYU, hope to find careers abroad in diplomacy and humanitarian aid, and are meanwhile involved in interfaith work and political activism in Utah and Salt Lake County.

Mirabella Keogh
Mirabella Archibald Keogh is a dual-degree student at Brigham Young University, studying Public Health Promotion and Middle Eastern Studies & Arabic. She is a passionate advocate for inclusive dialogue, global understanding, and nonpartisan bridge-building. Alongside her husband, she co-founded The Peacemaker Project, a campus-wide initiative focused on depolarization and civil discourse grounded in mutual respect and dignified dialogue. Driven by a deep interest in international law, Mirabella has represented BYU as an award-winning delegate at both Model United Nations and Model Arab League conferences. Her research experience spans public health, legal inclusion, and foreign policy, and she is committed to bridging global divides through evidence-based advocacy and cross-cultural collaboration. Mirabella plans to pursue law school after graduation. In her free time, she enjoys playing the harp and re-reading every book by L.M. Montgomery—several times a year.

Katelyn Parker
Katelyn Parker is a recent graduate from Utah State University with a bachelor of art in International Studies and a minor in Chinese. She also received certificates of proficiency in Global Peacebuilding and Leadership and Diplomacy through the Heravi Peace Institute. She is now working on a Masters of Anticipatory Intelligence at Utah State University.

Emma Martins
Emma Martins is a sophomore at Utah State University majoring in Political Science with minors in Arabic and Religious Studies, and a certificate in Global Peacebuilding. She is particularly interested in Middle Eastern politics and grassroots peacebuilding initiatives. Her paper examines the disconnect between the skills and opportunities available to youth in peacebuilding, and argues that speech and debate can help bridge this gap. A former high school debater who placed 9th nationally, Emma credits debate with empowering her and equipping her with the tools to engage in peace-focused work. She currently serves on the Heravi Peace Institute Student Board.

Hunter Fillerup
Hunter Fillerup is an upcoming senior at Brigham Young University, where he studies Philosophy and Economics. Originally from Denver, Colorado, he plans to attend law school after graduation. His studies have made him curious about how we solve problems—especially the kind that involve understanding each other better. He enjoys reading, hiking, playing basketball, and experimenting in the kitchen—though not always successfully.

Our Interns

In collaboration with BYU and USU

SPENCER BENNETT

Graduating from BYU in April 2027

Majoring in International Relations and Economics

DARIAN FERRY

Graduating from BYU in April 2025

Majoring in Information Systems

THOMAS PACKHAM

Graduating from BYU in April 2026

Majoring in International Relations

KIRSTEN DEWBERRY

Graduating from USU in April 2026

Majoring in International Studies & Political Science

Welcoming Our New
Project Manager

LESLIE RODRIGUEZ-DIAZ

The Baskerville Institute is excited to announce Leslie Rodriguez-Diaz as the new Project Manager this summer, succeeding Delara. Leslie, who interned with us last year, displayed exceptional project coordination skills and a collaborative spirit. She is enthusiastic about engaging with the team and exploring growth opportunities. We anticipate her leadership will bring renewed energy and insight, and we look forward to her contributions. Please join us in welcoming Leslie back!

leslier1012@gmail.com

An Essay from our Sports Ambassador

The Role of Taekwondo Coaches in
Communicating with Students

SAM HESAM REZAEI

Coaches are considered reliable figures in children's lives. They are not only sport activity instructors but also life counselors to their students, helping them build meaningful, constructive, and fulfilling lives. Therefore, students look up to them as leaders and role models. Students often feel more comfortable and open when communicating with their sports coaches, as they perceive fewer barriers compared to school teachers. Drawing from my experience in teaching, instructing, and coaching since the age of fifteen, I'd like to share some key topics that Taekwondo coaches should prioritize to have a positive impact on their students' lifestyles and individual development.

Read the full essay <u>here</u>.

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The Baskerville Institute

Mission of the Baskerville Institute:
Diplomacy of the Heart

The Baskerville Institute is dedicated to fostering global peace and understanding through the practice of "Diplomacy of the Heart." We believe that genuine human connection, rooted in empathy, compassion, and mutual respect, is essential for building lasting partnerships and resolving conflicts. By engaging scholars, students, diplomats, and communities, we aim to create safe spaces for dialogue, promote storytelling that bridges cultural divides, and inspire future leaders to prioritize humanity in their international engagements. Through conferences, educational initiatives, and collaborative programs, we strive to cultivate a global culture of heart-centered diplomacy that transcends political and ideological barriers.

Why Baskerville Institute in Utah?
Diplomacy of the Heart: Building Bridges through Human Connection

The Baskerville Institute embodies the spirit of "Diplomacy of the Heart" by fostering enduring human connections rooted in empathy, mutual understanding, and cultural exchange. This tradition dates back over a century, reflecting a commitment to building bridges among communities of different faiths, nationalities, and cultural backgrounds. Central to this mission is the principle of the dignity of difference—the recognition that diversity enriches our shared humanity. By facilitating dialogue and collaboration, the Institute nurtures partnerships that transcend political and social divides, emphasizing human dignity and the value of diverse perspectives. Through educational exchanges, humanitarian initiatives, and cultural programs, the Baskerville Institute continues to inspire a global movement toward peace, friendship, and deeper human connection.