Afghan peacemakers complete online class on nonviolence

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One hallmark of Jesuit education is to impart a calling to serve with those at the margins of society. As we take our peacemaking efforts to the margins of society, we are also celebrating many developments on campus that have led Marquette to become known as a leading peacemaking institution.

As you may know, the Center for Peacemaking relocated to a more prominent space on campus. Additionally, the Center has been at the forefront of two key university initiatives: PARC (Promoting Assets and Reducing Crime on the Near West Side of Milwaukee) and the newly announced Global Campus Partnership with Catholic Relief Services (CRS).

The Peace Works program will be featured on Wisconsin Public Radio and in the Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel. We will e-mail the links to this coverage in our e-newsletter, which you can sign up for on our new website.

In this edition of Prints of Peace, we highlight three of our students who have travelled to the margins: one to Haiti and two to Ethiopia. We also share the story behind a class on nonviolence offered to Afghan youth.

Lastly, the work of Dr. Beth Godbee brings us back to the classroom, where she is one of many faculty members who are integrating peacemaking concepts into their courses.

As you join us in celebrating these accomplishments, I ask you to consider the Center for Peacemaking in any year-end giving plans.

It is through your friendship, encouragement, and financial support that peacemaking continues to grow both on the margins and in the mainstream.

Patrick Kennelly

“The Center for Peacemaking Team

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Sharing a Message of Peace

Your gifts are redefining perceptions of peace
Jenny gained valuable professional experience and developed necessary skills for public health work through her fellowship. You have helped bring her one step closer to her goal of leading community-based programs that provide health services to marginalized populations.
A group of multi-ethnic Afghan students gathered intently around a laptop at the Borderfree Center for Nonviolence in Kabul, Afghanistan. They eagerly listened to Patrick Kennelly, director of the Center for Peacemaking, who was teaching the students how to complete an online class about peace and nonviolence facilitated through the Center for Peacemaking.

Over the past five years staff and alumni of the Center for Peacemaking regularly visited the Afghan Peace Volunteers, a group of multi-ethnic Afghans committed to learning about and practicing nonviolence. The partnership between the two centers has evolved to include the launch of an online class which provides Afghan youth a way to learn the principles of peacemaking and nonviolence.

The idea for the class originated from a conversation between Kennelly and Dr. Wee Teck Young, known by Afghans as “Hakim.” Hakim, who serves as a mentor to the Afghan Peace Volunteers, expressed a desire to connect marginalized Afghan youth with the intellectual resources of Marquette University and the Center for Peacemaking.

Kennelly quickly went to work composing an
online class based on the four key components of Marquette’s peace studies curriculum: peacemaking, peacekeeping, peacebuilding, and nonviolence. After determining the curriculum, Kennelly and Billy Malloy (Nursing ’11) travelled to the Borderfree Center for Nonviolence in Kabul to meet the first group of students and launch the class.

The class includes ten lessons consisting of a reading, a group discussion at the Borderfree Center, and a short response to online questions. The discussion and short response help to evaluate each student’s understanding, analysis, and application of the lesson’s content.

Through participation in the class, the Afghan students came to appreciate the wider community of academics and activists willing to share resources on nonviolent methods, approaches, and strategies that can be used to transform the current situation in Afghanistan.

In the written responses, the students demonstrated a clear understanding of important nonviolence concepts.

Responding to a prompt about power, Bassir wrote, “I think power has two main sides, just like a double-edge sword; one is the very basic meaning of power as ‘to be able’, that is to be able to do stuff the way you want and you can. The second one is the ability to control the other, to monitor what they are doing and to get the other to do what you want them to do.”

Another module explored the difference between retributive and restorative justice and how these concepts relate to peacemaking. Fatima wrote, “Restorative justice believes in rehabilitation of offenders. However, retributive justice believes that punishment is the only way of decreasing crime and bringing justice.” She continued to explain how, “Retributive justice promotes the feeling of revenge and does not give time for the victim and offender to talk directly with each other to solve the conflict. But, restorative justice can play an important role in peacemaking between victim and offender because they can negotiate with each other. By finding answers for why a crime was committed, the victims may forgive the offenders and can reconcile with each other.”

Many Afghan youth have lived in war for their entire lives and are interested in learning how to practice nonviolence to build a better future in Afghanistan.

Through the course students were challenged to relate the content with the current situation in Afghanistan. Many of these responses mentioned a sense of personal responsibility to work as peacemakers.

Hoor explained, “I believe peace comes from within us. We are all human beings, so we should know each other well, and most importantly, we must know ourselves well. Afghans do not trust each other. In order to show that we can all live under the same blue sky without any difference, we must make communities made up of different ethnic groups, like the Afghan Peace Volunteers did in Kabul. The challenge we have is with ourselves and one another, and if we really want peace in Afghanistan, we have to be able to live together.”

The Center for Peacemaking’s partnership with the Afghan Peace Volunteers has created many unique opportunities for Marquette students.

- More than 40 students have participated in Skype calls with the Afghan Peace Volunteers over the past five years. On these calls Marquette students share why they study nonviolence and the Afghan youth share why they joined the Afghan Peace Volunteers and provide information about how they are working for peace in their communities.
- Ashley Morgan, a peace studies minor, wrote a paper on the Afghan Peace Volunteers for Marquette’s Introduction to Peace Studies course. She used actions and campaigns led by the Afghan Peace Volunteers as case studies of the theory discussed in the class.

Students Skype with Afghan Peace Volunteers in 2012.
For the second year in a row, Marquette students and staff travelled to Ethiopia to learn about sustainable peacebuilding and development with Catholic Relief Services (CRS). On the two-week trip, Kayce Scherzer (Nursing ’17) and Rebecca Zellelew (Arts and Sciences ’16) learned about CRS projects by visiting programs and meeting participants.

Kayce and Rebecca were able to visit one of the many Savings and Internal Lending Communities (SILC) sites. The goal of SILC is to protect assets and increase income for the poor. Similar to a banking system, SILC is run by elected group members who are in charge of money and loans within the community. The money from all program participants is placed in a box, and when a member needs to take money out, they must promise to repay the loan. Many members achieve financial independence as a result of participating in SILC.

Rebecca and Kayce also visited a site of the Arborloo waste system. This system, which costs only $7.00 US dollars, was created to increase sanitation and family income. To use the Arborloo system, a family digs a hole that is six feet deep and two feet wide. They then purchase a latrine slab and use the hole as their bathroom for about a year. After covering the hole, the family plants a fruit tree where the hole used to be, and digs a new hole. This type of rotational system not only allows for a cleaner environment and decreased disease, but the newly planted seed grows into a source of food and becomes a valuable aspect of income if the family chooses to sell the fruit it produces.

These two projects allowed Kayce and Rebecca to see how project participants worked together to provide better lives for themselves and their communities. As a result, Rebecca and Kayce had the opportunity to observe how CRS is working on the margins of society by contributing to the development of peaceful and self-sufficient societies.

As a nursing major, this trip allowed Kayce to further explore her interest in global health, especially in developing countries. She explained how, “Ethiopia struggles with gender inequality and female genital mutilation and we were at the heart of these issues.”

Rebecca was also inspired by the trip and added Peace Studies as a major. She hopes to travel back to Ethiopia for an extended period of time after graduation to work with CRS or a similar organization.
For the past few years Dr. Beth Godbee, assistant professor of English, has researched how communication can be used to counter violence and build more equitable relations. She received a Rynne Faculty Research Fellowship for the summer of 2015 to explore the role rhetoric and communication play in understanding power structures, power abuse, and forms of violence.

She is especially excited to use her research in the classroom. One of the lessons focuses on identifying the appropriate action to take in response to an injustice.

Godbee provides a framework for the three fundamental types of power responses. First is ‘power over’ which symbolizes domination or status. Second is ‘power with’ which is best described as solidarity or standing with the oppressed. Third is ‘power to’ which is based on using our resources to take action or create a solution.

Each type of power has a corresponding response-ability, or a way in which one can respond. The response-ability associated with ‘power over’ is expressed in the phrase “speaking truth to power.”

“Power in numbers” is the basis of ‘power with’ or solidarity. She adds that in practicing solidarity, it is more important to “stand on the same ground” literally or symbolically than to be in the same position as the oppressed.

Lastly, the response-ability that corresponds with ‘power to’ is summed up with the phrase “power to the people” which recognizes that these problems were created by people and thus can be fixed by people.

Through teaching these three types of power and the corresponding response-abilities, Godbee challenges her students who express complacency or deflect responsibility.

The knowledge students gain through English courses such as Writing for Social Justice are important because she says, “when they see injustice they can enact change and avoid complacency.”

Her students learn that whenever and wherever they witness or experience injustice, they have the ability to respond.

Because of this research Godbee says that students are “learning to transform, and practice different ways of enacting power” as well as “how to see ourselves as powerful with and alongside others.”

Dr. Godbee and her research partners/co-publishers, Dr. Rasha Diab of University of Texas at Austin and Dr. Thomas Ferrell of University of Missouri-Kansas City, were recently part of a multi-city trip in which they presented their research at universities and conferences.
Jackie Barajas (Arts & Sciences ‘14) used her peace studies major to secure a placement with the Peace Corps in Ecuador. She now works for the Resurrection Project in Chicago.

Because of donors like you, students are able to pursue careers that promote peace and human dignity.