Hon. George Mitchell: Lessons from brokering peace agreements

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“The aim and end of all learning,” Benjamin Franklin claimed, was, “an inclination joined with an ability to serve mankind.” Throughout a polarizing election, turbulent social climate and growing instability around the world, fostering the development of young people as peacemakers who have both the “inclination” and the “ability” to serve humankind is at the core of who we are and what we do at the Center for Peacemaking.

As we send students out into the world I see women and men who are willing to step into the unknown; role models who engage others in dialogue and discourse; and individuals who show how nonviolence can pragmatically address injustice and love can drive out hate. In this edition of Prints of Peace, we highlight how your generosity makes it possible for students to learn from peacemakers like the Hon. George Mitchell, whose work brings people into dialogue to end seemingly intractable conflicts.

We share stories of students who are learning the human dimensions of immigrant experiences on the U.S./Mexico border, as well as stories of students who are exploring how they can work with veterans and youth impacted by violence to find solutions that recognize human dignity.

Your support provides opportunities for students to develop both the “inclination” and the “ability” to serve humankind. Please consider the Center for Peacemaking in any year-end giving plans. It is through your friendship, encouragement, and generous financial support that peacemaking continues to grow at Marquette and throughout the world.

Patrick Kennelly

The Courage to Dialogue
Your gifts have inspired discourse and dignity
Cate Sullivan-Konyn’s interest in violence prevention is rooted in her proximity to people whose lives have been changed by violence. As a high school student, Cate worked at a summer camp for elementary school-aged kids who were victimized by violence. The issue hit even closer to home when a friend was affected by gun violence.

Cate brought these experiences with her to Marquette where she found the Center for Peacemaking, a place where she could learn how to reduce youth violence. As a freshman, Cate started working for the Center for Peacemaking’s Peace Works program as a nonviolence educator. Every week she received coaching before going to a Milwaukee middle school to teach eighth-grade girls nonviolent communication and conflict resolution skills.

This experience helped Cate realize her passion for working with children, specifically teaching them peacemaking and nonviolence techniques. She decided to further explore this interest by applying for a summer peacemaking fellowship, which she received. These fellowships are available for students like Cate because of donors like you.

For her fellowship project, Cate served as a counselor at a summer peace camp run by Little Friends for Peace, a peace education organization based in Washington, D.C. When she arrived in D.C., she got right to work with the campers, using some of the skills she gained while working for the Center as a nonviolence educator. The activities — art projects, skits, cooperative games, songs, peace circles, and yoga — focused on building personal peace and a culture of peace. “If you want peace in the world, you really have to start with yourself,” Cate said.

One of the things Cate most appreciated about working with Little Friends for Peace was the emphasis on peace as a possibility for anyone, regardless of their circumstances. This message struck a chord with the young campers — many of whose families emigrated from conflict-ridden countries like Cameroon and Nigeria.

Despite coming from a different background than most of the youth she worked with at the peace camp and in Peace Works, she found that everyone shared a longing for a culture of peace. Cate reflected that “when you are around violence and know people whose lives have been changed by violence, you wonder what type of alternatives there are.”

Because of your support, Cate was able to study how to resolve conflicts nonviolently and teach youth how to use these skills in their daily lives. She plans to make a career out of these experiences by becoming a school social worker after she graduates.
George Mitchell inspires students and faculty to work for peace

The prominent American lawyer, businessman, and statesman visited Marquette to share his experiences negotiating peace in seemingly unsolvable conflicts

by Claire Guinta

The Center for Peacemaking hosted the Honorable George Mitchell on October 6 for a discussion of his memoir, The Negotiator, and a lecture on the topic of “Turbulence in the Middle East.” Mitchell served as U.S. Senate Majority Leader, Special Envoy for Northern Ireland, and Special Envoy for Middle East Peace. He is a pragmatist who understands the value of peace for all, and his words offered inspiration and insight into the world of negotiation.

The remarks he shared at Marquette covered his involvement in peace negotiations in Ireland and Israel/Palestine, as well as advice for student peacemakers.

Peace in Northern Ireland

During his time in Northern Ireland, Mitchell led the way to establishing nonviolent principles during the peace talks and was active in the negotiations that led to the successful Good Friday Agreement. While discussing his memoir, Mitchell shared some of the nonviolent communication methods he used in Northern Ireland.

He shared that he sat and listened with then-President Clinton as the Catholics came in and listed their grievances against the Protestants for 30 minutes and then left. Then, they listened as the Protestants did the same. When Mitchell could convince them to come in the same room to talk and see each other as victims instead of just perpetrators of violence, that is when the negotiations began to work.

He said that when he returned to Northern Ireland just a few years ago, he found the people there to be going on with normal conversations and he felt his work had truly set the foundations for peace.

Peace in the Middle East

A central message in his lecture on the Middle East was the power of recognizing the similarities we all share, whether it be with our neighbors or those living across the world.

“What most people in the Muslim world want is what most people everywhere want: a stable, secure
society, a decent job, a decent home, and most importantly, a chance to give their children a good chance in life,” Mitchell said. He added, “I have been to many countries in the Muslim world and, while they are different in many ways, at heart everybody wants the same thing: a decent life.”

Mitchell stressed the importance of remaining candid and frank about issues, no matter who the audience is. He shared that his message is the same when he is speaking to Israelis, Palestinians, Americans, or other Arabs: the objective is to get a peace agreement between Israel and Palestine.

He does not see the lack of a current peace agreement as a failure; instead, he sees progress being built brick by brick towards peace in the Middle East.

When asked about the role of the United States in this conflict, Mitchell said that to move them in the direction of serious negotiations, the U.S. needs to inspire the two sides in a positive way rather than threaten them.

Students as Today’s Peacemakers

Mitchell explained that we should “think of peace as more than just resolving violent conflict. It’s giving people opportunity and using our knowledge, skills, and science to help people.”

First, he suggested students pursue educational programs that teach peace studies and conflict resolution.

Second, he pointed to the growth of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) as a terrific opportunity for students to engage in conflict resolution, promote economic development, and build justice systems.

Lastly, he encouraged students to take part in service activities helping those in need, both at home and abroad.

Mitchell’s visit was a unique opportunity to learn from a prominent player in negotiations and peace talks around the world.
To start with a line from our strategic plan, a core part of the Center’s mission is to “engage students in rigorous and transformative educational experiences.” Every year students are able to participate in these transformative experiences because of your generosity.

In fact, just a month ago, I took eight students to the U.S./Mexico border as part of a powerful and formational educational experience. The trip impacted each of students in different ways.

Some of the students were moved by the display of solidarity we participated in outside of the Eloy Detention Center in Eloy, Arizona. As the sun set in the background, several hundred people listened to former detainees who were recently released from the immigrant detention center share stories about the conditions and treatment inside.

These gut-wrenching stories continued into the night. After nightfall, a candlelight vigil began and just as the light in the windows stood out in the dark and vast desert, our candles were visible to the detainees. Some of them turned the lights in their cells on and off to let us know they could see us. This display of solidarity was especially powerful after hearing from others who had been detained there.

Arriving at the border wall was another powerful experience for the students. One student wrote in a reflection, “I still feel it in the pit of my stomach when I think about that border wall. It was a physical barrier separating me from the rest of the world.”

All through the weekend, students met with educators and organizers who work in the border town of Nogales. They attended workshops and struck up conversations with representatives of groups including School of the Americas Watch, Veterans for Peace, Border Patrol Victims Network, National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights, and Chicago Religious Leadership Network on Latin America.

While each of the students were impacted in a different way, they all came away from the experience invigorated with the desire to work for peace and justice through their volunteering, internships, or future careers.

Marquette students visited the U.S./Mexico border to explore the human dimensions of immigration policy and migrant experiences.

**by Chris Jeske**

The new border wall in Nogales ranges from 18 to 30 feet in height for a span of 2.8 miles.

Shivani Chokshi (Arts & Sciences ’17) talks with Fr. Roy Bougouis, founder of SOA-W.

Students attend a candlelight vigil outside the Eloy Detention Center to stand in solidarity with detainees.

Marquette students and Center for Peacemaking staff at the border wall in Nogales, AZ.
Like many Marquette students, David Dalton (Arts & Sciences ’18) is an avid volunteer. Through his service experiences, he has learned about many of the challenges the people of Milwaukee face every day. So as he brainstormed ideas for a summer peace-making fellowship project, he found that he was drawn to staying in Milwaukee to look at the issues in our community rather than going to another city or country.

He felt drawn to one place in particular: VETS Place, a full-service, one-stop homeless shelter providing a holistic approach to serving the homeless veteran population.

David decided to interview the homeless veterans at VETS Place and learn what nonviolence means to them. When he shared his idea with Director Mr. K’yuu Wamubu, he received a one-line response: “Make it happen, brother.”

With this encouragement, David set about finalizing his plans to conduct interviews with the veterans about their experiences and how they have impacted their views on nonviolence.

From his previous experience volunteering at VETS Place, David knew that the veterans’ experiences varied from combat roles in Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan to non-combat assignments at various international and domestic bases.

As he met with the veterans throughout the summer, he found that their responses were as varied as their experiences, and each offered him valuable insights. Some of the topics that came up included violence in Milwaukee, the survival instincts of combat soldiers, and struggles adjusting to civilian life.

On this last item, David summarized their remarks: “They told me that the military teaches you to take orders and fight, that’s the primary principle of being a soldier, so with that being said, how do you turn that off and become a regular citizen again?”

David didn’t need to pry for the veterans to share personal stories with him. The most profound moment for David was when a veteran named John opened up and shared his life story. To answer David’s questions about nonviolence and peace, John felt he first needed to share how his life has been affected by violence.

“It was eye opening to me that one man can experience so much violence in his lifetime,” David said.

Because of your support, David was able to develop the skills necessary to lead dialogues with veterans on peacemaking and nonviolence.
CRS Student Ambassadors participate in an advocacy campaign to end human trafficking.

Marquette University is one of CRS’ seven Global Campus Partners. The initiative at MU is coordinated by the Center for Peacemaking.