Peace Works: reducing violence and transforming youth

Peacemaking in Peru
Student provides mental health services to youth

Processes of Reconciliation
Mixing literature and law to achieve justice

Nonviolence Course in India
Students visit CRS and religious peacebuilding orgs

SUMMER 2017
Recently, a student asked me about the attributes of nonviolence. I explained that nonviolence is active. It requires love, compassion and work. It is based on understanding others and results in the transformation rather than the defeat of others.

Every day at the Center for Peacemaking, I am privileged to witness students growing in their understanding of nonviolence and developing as peacemakers.

The stories in the following pages show how your generosity prepares students to practice active nonviolence in their personal and professional lives.

In Milwaukee, the Center for Peacemaking is addressing violence in inner-city communities by providing youth with the skills to resolve conflicts and promote peace. The cover story shows how you are making a difference in the lives of students who have been expelled from school by giving them a second chance and providing them the skills they need to set and achieve goals.

Beyond Milwaukee, students traveled to India to understand inter-religious peacebuilding and the vital role religious and peace organizations play in contributing to international development. And in Peru, a student fellow enhanced her language skills and developed conflict resolution skills among vulnerable populations.

These experiences help students develop the awareness and cultural and linguistic competencies to become effective global leaders and peacemakers.

Thank you for making each of these stories possible. I am amazed by your commitment to ensuring students have every opportunity to grow as peacemakers.

Patrick Kennelly
Margaret Grace enrolled in Marquette’s Clinical Psychology Ph.D program to develop a career around her passion for providing mental health services for Latino youth.

With this dream in mind, she set two personal and professional goals for herself: First, to refine her Spanish language skills. Second, to gain more field experience with Latino youth.

She learned about the PASEO program while searching for ways to accomplish these goals. PASEO, or the Psychology and Spanish Elective Opportunity program, is a three-week Spanish language immersion program in Huanchaco, Peru designed specifically for mental health professionals.

A feeling of excitement overcame her upon discovering this program. It was exactly the opportunity she was looking for.

But Margaret knew she would need help to make this happen because, as she said, “the program costs were substantial.”

Margaret then turned her attention to applying for a summer peacemaking fellowship. These fellowships are available for students like her because of donors like you. And in Margaret’s case, she wouldn’t have been able to pursue this opportunity otherwise.

So when Margaret received news that she was awarded a fellowship, she immediately booked her ticket and began preparing for the program.

In Peru, she fully engaged with both components of the program: language classes and a field placement. She excelled in the coursework designed to strengthen her linguistic and clinical skills, and she thrived while providing mental health services to children in a low resource region of Peru.

Margaret’s service learning field placement was at Mundo de Niños, an orphanage for boys age 6 to 18. Though young, the life experiences of these boys make them at-risk for mental health issues.

She worked with sixteen boys at the orphanage in individual and group settings to develop the coping, conflict resolution, and social skills they need to overcome their negative childhood experiences and achieve future success.

Through her fellowship, Margaret learned tangible skills and gained valuable experience to better provide mental health services to Latino populations in the United States and globally.

Thanks to you, Margaret was able to achieve the two goals she set for herself as she readies for her future career as a mental health professional.

The PASEO program was exactly the opportunity Margaret was looking for. And she was only able to pursue it because of your generosity.
Youth develop skills to resolve conflicts and promote peace

In the Peace Works program, youth learn how to identify destructive emotions and behaviors, as well as how to communicate in ways that de-escalate conflicts. Your gifts set Peace Works students on the path to success.

by Aaron Bledsoe and Chris Jeske

The decision to place a student in one of Milwaukee Public Schools’ Behavioral Reassignment (BR) schools usually comes as a surprise to the student. “What is this? Why do I even have to go here?” were the first thoughts that ran through the mind of a student reassigned to a BR school.

BR schools are alternative schools designed to provide continued education for students who have been expelled from their previous school due to behavior or character issues. This is one of the settings in which the Center for Peacemaking offers the Peace Works program.

Because of your generosity, students have a space to talk about their emotions and learn how to improve their behaviors. You help create this needed space for youth at a time when they feel everyone else has given up on them.

One of the first observations Shafiq, an MPS high school student, made when he started attending Peace Works at his BR school was: “The people at Peace Works don’t judge and they will accept you.” This is one of the first steps Peace Works staff take to build relationships with their new students. It also validates to the students how they perceive
themselves: “I’m not a bad kid. Most of us just made mistakes but we aren’t bad people,” said Adai, a Peace Works student at an MPS BR school.

While most people have given up on students by the time they are placed in BR schools, Peace Works gives them a second chance. The students need people who believe that giving them the opportunity to participate in Peace Works can help them find a new path to success. “We find that in most cases when students ‘act up’ it is because they don’t know how to constructively deal with their emotions. The reason that students enjoy coming to Peace Works is because it helps them learn important lessons they aren’t learning elsewhere,” said Peace Works Coordinator Pam Stahler.

In BR schools, two to five Peace Works students at a time meet in small groups to complete each lesson. The lessons combine reflections, discussions, games, and role plays so students can practice different ways of responding to challenging situations and emotions. Sometimes students don’t realize how much they learn during these activities until later in the week when they are confronted with a tricky situation similar to what was practiced in Peace Works and are proud of how they handle it.

One lesson focuses on positive communication and allows students to explore several strategies to help 1) identify the specific situations that bother them, 2) clearly state their emotions, and 3) seek out potential solutions to the problem. A week after practicing this, a student with a history of angry outbursts in class told us that he used his new communication skills to avoid a confrontation with a teacher over a missing assignment. Instead of his usual reaction of yelling or storming out of the classroom, he was able to take some deep breaths, say that he was feeling frustrated, and ask the teacher if they could talk about his options after class when he felt more calm.

Each time a moment like this happens – when students successfully identify and change their behavior – it puts them a step closer to returning to a regular MPS school. And as these new behaviors and responses turn into habits, you make a much larger impact than simply helping students work through current issues: you provide students with the skills they need to achieve success far into their futures.

All the Peace Works lessons are designed with this long-term view of preparing youth to become contributing members of a more peaceful, just, and empathetic society. Some of the skills youth learn in Peace Works include anger management, active listening, managing stress, dealing with difficult people, conflict resolution, and goal setting.

The goal setting lesson is particularly formative for students as it forces them to think about the future and their future self. This is the lesson that helped Shafiq the most. “It helped me single my goals out because before, I didn’t really think about it,” he said. As Shafiq identified three types of goals – academic, character, and future – he realized that focusing on his interests would be the key to creating his own success.

One of Shafiq’s passions is drawing, and he wants to create animations for commercials, television, and films. During this lesson, he created a plan to make this happen. “My goals are to graduate from [high school] with at least a 3.0 grade point average and to attend a college with an arts program,” Shafiq said, proud to share his goals with you.

Earlier this semester, Shafiq learned that he was again being reassigned to a new school – this time it was to give him another chance at success in a regular MPS high school. He will carry the skills he learned in Peace Works forward with him as he takes this next step toward fulfilling his goals and dreams.

Thank you for believing in students like Shafiq – and for teaching him the skills to make the most of his second chance. ■
Peacemaking, Literature, and Law

by Claire Guinta

Dr. Christine Krueger didn’t always intend to pursue a career teaching English literature. She started college wanting to be a lawyer before she was “kidnapped” by a fantastic literature professor, as she tells the story.

Because of this history, she jumped at the opportunity to contribute a chapter to a Cambridge University Press “Critical Concepts” volume on Law and Literature.

To complete her research, she received a Rynne Faculty Fellowship, which is available because of donors like you.

For Krueger, literature and law are inseparable. Referencing Victorian literature (which contains social critiques of materialism, imperialism, and sexism), she explains that some important literary movements wouldn’t have been possible without changes in the law and vice versa.

Working from this premise, Krueger’s chapter, titled “Law, Literature and History,” focuses on the use of narrative as a method of truth-telling and reconciliation after historical traumas. Specifically, she explores the Shoah project documenting Holocaust survivor testimonies and South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission after Apartheid.

The modern emphasis that political justice puts on storytelling about history traces back to the Holocaust through the Nuremberg Trials and the Shoah project. Several years later the South Africa Truth and Reconciliation Commission paved the way for many more restorative justice and community healing projects. Krueger figured these two topics would have broad appeal to an international audience.

Krueger’s research fellowship helped her develop a better understanding of these programs while also identifying a few critiques. For example, Krueger points out that when looking at the past, we will always be more critical of the relationship between literature and law because neither is totally reliable. Additionally, hindsight makes it easier to point out the gap between telling your story and achieving material justice. To be clear, Krueger doesn’t see these as devastating criticisms, instead presenting them as a challenge to continue refining the role of narrative in justice processes.

Krueger circles back to an example in Victorian literature to explain this.

Some Victorian novels aimed to convince people that their oppression was a good thing with messages along the lines of “working people, you shouldn’t be rising up, you should be content because God wants you to be.”

Similarly, she found that some scholars who participated in Truth and Reconciliation Commissions have mixed feelings about their own roles in the process, wondering if they provided victims a false sense of recompense or told them they should feel justice even if they didn’t.

For Krueger, this shows that simply telling a story about the past doesn’t guarantee justice in the future.

Overall, Krueger aims to find a balance that helps to soften law students and harden literature students.

She sums this up by noting that storytelling is one of the tools literature offers to help achieve peace, justice, and reconciliation.
On the first day of the new year, a group of seven Marquette students arrived in India for the start of a two-week immersion trip. The trip represented a continuation of the Center for Peacemaking’s commitment to providing transformational educational experiences for Marquette students. It also represented the first time students received academic credit for one of our international programs.

Students earned three Theology credits toward a class titled “Faith and the Role of Non-violence: Religious Peace-building in India.” India’s rich history of nonviolent social movements and religious diversity creates a fertile environment for students to explore the many ways these topics intersect.

Students gained a deeper appreciation for the assigned pre-trip readings on interfaith approaches to nonviolence after visiting sites of historical and cultural significance such as the National Gandhi Museum, the Lotus temple, Jama Masjid mosque, Taj Mahal, and Gobind Sadan Sikh community.

The highlight for the students was the time spent visiting community members and professionals engaged in grassroots peacebuilding.

The students met with the head of Jesuit Refugee Services in South Asia and the country director for Catholic Relief Services. Both experts shared how their organizations engage in peacebuilding and how to get a job in international peacemaking. The students met with leading Muslim and secular organizations to learn how they are responding to attacks on religious minorities in India.

These meetings provided students the opportunity to ask questions and spend one-on-one time with professionals who devote their lives to development and peacemaking.

As the students wrote in their reflections, this was a “once-in-a-lifetime experience.”
Maggie Stang, Arts & Sciences ‘17, tends to a beehive as part of her peacemaking fellowship titled “Bee the Change.” She led a beekeeping project on the roof of an urban church as a way of building relationships between students, parishioners, and homeless individuals.

Because of donors like you, students are able to create peacemaking projects that promote ecological justice and care for creation.