

ICAR NEWS

A Publication of the Institute for
Conflict Analysis and Resolution

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY

Mediators Beyond Borders Blaze a Trail in Copenhagen

By Diane Perlman Ph.D., ICAR Visiting Scholar, dperlman@gmu.edu

In December 2009, the city of Copenhagen hosted COP 15, the 15th meeting of the Conference of Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), with nothing less than the viability of the biosphere and the future of civilization at stake.

A record 45,000 people registered for the official UN meeting at the Bella Center. Delegates, negotiators, NGOs, press, and over 1000 youth participated in more than 2000 events over two weeks. Downtown, 10,000 people per day attended the Klima Forum, People's Climate Summit, civil society's counterpart to the UN conference. The city buzzed with demonstrations, rallies, exhibits, and concerts. On December 12th, 100,000 people marched in a rally to the Bella Center.

A palpable sense of urgency and desperation mounted as the conference wore on and its flaws and conflicts became apparent, driven by the power dynamics of the UN process. The resulting frustration was expressed in many ways - artistically, dramatically, creatively, and spontaneously. The collective outcry for consciousness, justice, and action stood in stark contrast to the official dis-



Copenhagen's disappointed mermaid. Photo: Diane Perlman.

course of developed nation elites parsing over how many degrees, and how many CO2 parts per million, in how many years, might be politically feasible within the constraints of vested interests. One commentator helplessly exclaimed that he could not believe that the state of international politics was such that a few US Senators could determine the fate of Africa.

In the face of such a humanitarian crisis, what role might conflict analysis experts play in averting catastrophe? Last

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ICAR Partners With Peace Corps For First Master's International Conflict Resolution Program

By Mike Giusti, ICAR M.S. Student and Graduate Student Services Assistant, mgiusti1@gmu.edu

This past December, ICAR officially announced its partnership with the Peace Corps to begin offering a Peace Corps Master's International (PCMI) program in conflict analysis and resolution. The Peace Corps' Master's International program is comprised of a consortium of 61 universities. The first conflict resolution-related program of its kind, students will be able to earn a Master's degree while simultaneously serving their two-year commitment to the Peace Corps.

Applicants to the program will apply through the standard admissions processes for the M.S. in Conflict Analysis and Resolution and Peace Corps service, and must be accepted into both programs in order to participate in the PCMI degree program. ICAR students participating in the program will spend two semesters and a summer on campus prior to commencing their 27-month Peace Corps fieldwork, and will return to campus for a final semester to complete their academic coursework.

The program is intended to provide Peace Corps volunteers with the skills necessary to operate effectively in post-conflict areas by augmenting their experience with conflict resolution training prior to their departure. In the academic year before their service, students will learn strategies for dealing with conflict surrounding matters of cultural sensitivity, discrimination, and minority issues and development, among others. As a result, each volunteer will be empowered with a knowledge base that will allow them to more effectively meet the challenges of navigating community issues of communication, public participation, and just governance that will inevitably arise during their field service. Moreover, the coursework in conflict analysis and resolution will augment each participant's ability to coordinate various and varied projects in a relatively harmonious environment.



Mason, ICAR, and Peace Corps representatives celebrate the Master's International partnership. Michelle Marks, Mason Associate Provost for Graduate Education; Krista Rigalo, Program and Training Specialist for the Peace Corps; Peter Stearns, Mason Provost; Eric Goldman, Director of the Peace Corps' Master's International program; and Andrea Bartoli, ICAR Director. Photo by Lori A. Wilson, George Mason University.

With this partnership, the hope is to take students with academic backgrounds and interests in an array of conflict resolution issues and provide them with the analytical and practical skills that will allow them to improve their ability to act rationally in potentially chaotic situations. In particular, focus will be placed on the ability to recognize and articulate the core issues of a conflict situation, developing an understanding of structural and societal violence, creating an acknowledgment of marginalized populations, and enhancing self-reflective performance in the field. ■

ICAR's First Spring Master's Cohort Welcomed

By Danielle Light, ICAR M.S. Student and Events Coordinator, dlight1@gmu.edu

This January, ICAR held its first ever Spring orientation session to welcome its inaugural Spring Master's cohort. Twenty-four Master's and eight Certificate students attended the half-day event, which introduced them to Mason's university services and the nuts and bolts of their respective academic programs. A student panel was on hand to answer questions and share their experience of student life at ICAR. The small cohort size enabled the incoming students to engage the administrative staff, and each other more directly, with expanded opportunity for introductions and networking.

In an effort to maintain cohort size and competitive admissions standards, the Fall admission numbers will be adjusted accordingly. ICAR's Ph.D. admissions cycle remains Fall only. With the addition of the Spring Master's admissions cycle, ICAR hopes to accommodate the needs of students from a variety of academic cycles and programming, including increased accessibility for international students. ICAR continues to be an exciting place with which to be involved as it evolves. The incoming students will undoubtedly be assets to the ICAR program bringing with them the enthusiasm and unique perspectives of their varied backgrounds. ■

network

Inaugural Citizen Diplomacy Class: A Student's Reflections on the Syrian Experience

By Seth Cohen, ICAR Ph.D. Student , scohen6@gmu.edu

When I began to question why I was going to Syria—and what my path is as a scholar/practitioner—I picked up Lederach's, *The Moral Imagination*, and was reminded of the web of relationships that we must cast with our fellow human beings if we want to build bridges between real or perceived enemies. Twenty of us were headed to Damascus with our own ideas about the "other" and perhaps our own expectations about how things might unfold. We read about Syria's political regime and we knew that former President Bush connected Syria to his "axis of evil," but very few of us knew any Syrians or had experienced "being" in Syria. As citizen diplomats, we had a unique opportunity to interact with Syrian students, professionals, government officials, religious leaders, and regular citizens—constructing a different reality from what we had heard or read in the United States.

Our experiential course was a result of citizen diplomacy in action, the product of a partnership between Dr. Marc Gopin and Syrian Hind Kabawat, which continues to transcend societal divisions and barriers because it is built on a common belief and joint effort to achieve positive change, one step at a time. At the Syrian International Academy we challenged stereotypes, learned about each other and our nations, and co-created new pathways for constructive engagement. The class really took shape when we broke out of the larger confines of the classroom into small, intimate mixed-group discussions about how we, as Syrian and American university students, understand conflict resolution and what it means to be a citizen diplomat. We understood "citizen diplomacy" as part of an age-old universal art of forming relationships across cultural, religious, and national boundaries. Under the guidance of Dr. Gopin, and his innovative book,



An artisan at work in Damascus. Photo: O. Alkhiami.



Citizen Diplomacy students with Dr. Marc Gopin and Hind Kabawat in Damascus. Photo: O. Alkhiami.

To Make the Earth Whole, we also discovered how useful the concept is as a formalized practice of peace building whereby individual actors go beyond mere contact with one another to form social networks that may lead to tipping points of transformative change (see Social Network Theory).

Throughout the week, our encounters provided us with Syrian perspectives on such issues as the Arab-Israeli conflict, the difficult challenges of Iraqi refugees, and how U.S. sanctions are hindering development in Syria. As international students, working in formal and informal Track II settings, we were moving beyond unhelpful political polarizations between the U.S. and Syria, all the while aware of how we might influence change at both the grassroots and Track I levels. Despite all of our positive interaction, there was an underlying unease and palpable tension that arose from an understanding that we were not totally free to speak our minds on every topic. However, in acknowledging that tension, we also realized that it was even more acute for our Syrian brothers and sisters.

One of the most profound experiences for our group was our meeting with the Grand Mufti, Sheik Hassoun, Syria's highest appointed Muslim leader. The Grand Mufti modeled what it means to be a leader who does not tolerate violence and instead lives by principles of compassion and love. His desire to protect the children of this world was evident, and in a moment of deep appreciation between the Mufti and Dr. Gopin, the group was moved to tears.

initiatives

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ICAR Serves on MLK Day

A "Day On" at Ron Brown Middle School

By Kristin Moriarty, ICAR M.S. Student and Undergraduate Program Assistant, kmoriart@gmu.edu

EVENTS



Kareem Terrell and his daughter at the ICAR Serves MLK Day project. Photo: L. E. Shaw.

On January 18th, Martin Luther King Day, the ICAR community joined City Year in honoring Dr. King's legacy by making the day "a day ON, not a day off." City Year, an organization of full time service leaders, hosted a high-impact service project at Ron

Brown Middle School in Washington D.C. City Year, along with their City Young Heroes, dedicates themselves to year round service and service projects. Martin Luther King Day is their alumni event in which they invite City Year alumni and other community members and friends to join them in their mission of serving the community.

There was a great response and turnout from the ICAR community, as students and alumni, along with faculty and staff, from both the undergraduate and graduate programs, came together to represent ICAR and George Mason University in a day of service.

The day began with an opening ceremony where ICAR volunteers joined City year in their

motivational warm up activities to prepare for a full day of service. Hundreds of community volunteers were warmly welcomed by City Year and City Year alumni. The service project was a beautification of Ron Brown Middle School in Washington D.C. After the opening ceremony, volunteers were divided into groups to join team leaders in working on many different parts of the middle school.

Ron Brown Middle School was teeming with energy as volunteers from around the D.C. metropolitan area worked on various beautification and small construction projects throughout the day. Volunteers worked on projects such as landscaping, organizing the library, and painting inspirational quotes and murals throughout the school. By the end of the day, many of the school's walls were lined with bright paintings of rockets, the school's mascot. Many of the classrooms were also filled with inspirational quotes and murals to brighten the learning environment. City Year corps members worked hard to ensure that all the volunteers were able to participate and contribute to the projects.

City Year's Martin Luther King Day service project, was incorporated as part of the larger vision of ICAR Serves, which is being spear-headed by the Undergraduate program. The events of the day provided an opportunity for ICAR to get involved and contribute to the D.C. community, as well as a chance to strengthen associations within the ICAR community as students, faculty, staff, alumni, and family members worked side by side. Thanks to everyone who contributed to the success of the day. ■



Dr. Susan Allen Nan with son, Oliver. Photo: L.E. Shaw.

Upcoming ICAR Community Events

Wednesday, February 10, 2010

ICAR - SPP Resume Clinic

3:30 pm - 4:30 pm, Original Building, TBA

Thursday, February 11, 2010

ISA Town Hall Meeting

7:30 pm - 9:30 pm, Truland Building, 555

Tuesday, February 9, 2010

ICAR - SPP Career Fair

6:00 pm - 7:00 pm, Original Building, TBA

Friday, March 26, 2010

Grad Student Etiquette Dinner

5:45 pm - 9:00 pm, Original Building, 329

Thursday, April 29, 2010

ISA Town Hall Meeting

7:30 pm - 9:30 pm, Truland Building, 555

<http://icar.gmu.edu/events.htm>

Adopting a Conflict Resolution Approach to Reconstruction in Haiti

By Mike Giusti, ICAR M.S. Student and Graduate Student Services Assistant, mgiusti@gmu.edu



Mike Giusti. Photo: Creative Services, GMU.

Having heard the news stories, watched videos and pictures, and followed Twitter posts from Dr. Bartoli, in the aftermath of Haiti's devastating earthquake, it is evident to me that conflict resolution theory needs to be integrated with reconstruction practices to prevent a protracted social conflict, a man-made disaster, emerging as an outcome of natural disaster. Basic Human Needs

theory should be carefully examined as the pieces are picked up and Haiti attempts to rebuild.

For Burton, human needs are a collection of human development essentials that are sought simultaneously. These human essentials include the need for structure, predictability, stability, and freedom from fear and anxiety, as well as the need for a fair allocation of resources. In addition to these most basic needs there are the issues of identity, culture, freedom, participation, and a sense of belongingness. However, given the immediacy of required assistance, a majority of these essentials may be left unmet.

Considering Burton's notion that unmet needs directly and deeply affect all other life issues, a prolonged situation of unmet needs in Haiti could lay the groundwork for protracted or intractable social conflict.

As the rubble is removed and aid floods in, and in the midst of the drive to establish a sense of security and stability in an otherwise chaotic situation, there is likely to be an intense conflict over natural resources. To combat this potential situation, it is vital to direct energy toward maintaining security and public safety and reestablishing a sense of governance and participation. This will require a highly organized interagency effort that is flexible enough to allow for participation from nongovernmental agencies, volunteer organizations, and individuals in need of direction. Aid money will need to be closely managed so as not to invite excess expenditures or misallocated funds.

Recognizing that this situation is complex and calls for a nuanced approach to reconstruction does not negate the fact that there is no room for error. The U.S., Haiti, and the broader international community cannot afford to oversee the emergence of another protracted social conflict at the expense of basic security. Burton's idea of human needs should serve as a guide to the reconstruction process. ■

Recent ICAR Articles, Op-Eds, Letters to the Editor

Conflict Resolution, One Book at a Time

By Roi Ben-Yehuda, ICAR Ph.D. Student
Common Ground News Service, 1/14/10

Lisbon - the First Step in Solving Europe's Identity Crisis

By Abou El Mahassine Fassi-Firi, ICAR M.S. Student
Common Ground News Service, 1/05/10

Peace Movement has Become Powerless, Says MK Yuli Tamir

By Roi Ben-Yehuda, ICAR Ph.D. Student
Harretz, 12/27/09

America's Role in Afghanistan - A Quiet One

By Michael Shank, ICAR Ph.D. Candidate
San Francisco Chronicle, 12/17/09

A Grassroots Visit Belies Washington's View of Afghanistan

By Michael Shank, ICAR Ph.D. Candidate
San Jose Mercury News, 12/12/09

Marginalizing Muslims in Switzerland

By Carrie Chomuik, ICAR M.S. Student
The Washington Post, 12/12/09

Sacrificing for the Planet

By Susan Allen Nan, ICAR Assistant Professor
The Washington Post, 12/10/09

Rawlings, Kufour Deserves The Hague

By Clement Aapengnuo, ICAR Ph.D. Student
Ghana Web 12/06/09

Unofficial International Conflict Resolution: Is There a Track 1 1/2? Are There Best Practices?

By Susan Allen Nan, ICAR Assistant Professor, Daniel Druckman, ICAR Affiliate and Professor of Public & International Affairs, and Jana El Horr, ICAR Ph.D. Student
Conflict Resolution Quarterly, Fall 2009

Letter From Kabul

By Michael Shank, Ph.D. Candidate
The Nation, 12/04/09

Afghans Want U.S. to Stay but do Things Differently

By Michael Shank, Ph.D. Candidate
Roll Call, 12/03/09

press

Yves-Renée Jennings, ICAR Ph.D. Candidate

By Molly Tepper, ICAR Ph.D. Student and John Burton Librarian, mtepper@gmu.edu

ICAR Spotlight

A keen sense of seeking to overcome injustices combined with developing opportunities for peace-building has been a foundation for Yves-Renee Jenning's work. After retiring from many years at the World Bank, Yves-Renee joined ICAR's Ph.D. program to explore the conflict dynamics of gender relations in post conflict countries. Previously focused on West African countries, she now sees important openings for practitioners in Haiti to rebuild, overcoming structural violence, creating dialogues, and develop civic responsibly.

Currently ABD, Yves-Renée is teaching and writing with Prof. Sandra Cheldelin. She has always been dedicated to building the ICAR community, as director of the GMU Dispute Resolution Project, chair of the Latin America working group and as an ICAR Student Association (formerly GSCS) board representative. She is active in the Gender working group and as a Drucie-Cumbie Fellow, she has been developing a grants portal for ICAR. Working in Haiti will not be a new initiative for

Yves-Renée, as her own non-profit organization "Partners for Sustainable Peace" has been working on conflict resolution, peace-building and social transformation in a project training the Dominican Republic and Haitian police officers at the border.

Yves-Renée is from Miragoane in the south-western part of

Haiti. She is married to William Jennings, who she met at church. Yves-Renée also has an adult son who lives here in Virginia. She loves to read, watch old movies, and host and Fellowship with others. Always passionate and determined in her work, she will no doubt continue to be a leader, overcoming adversity and building peace. ■



Yves-Renée Jennings. Photo: ICAR.

ICAR M.S. Student and Staff Member, Laurence Gehy

By Molly Tepper, ICAR Ph.D. Student and John Burton Librarian, mtepper@gmu.edu

Calmly and effectively organizing behind the scenes, when she is not in class, ICAR Master's student, Laurence Gehy, can often be found handling event coordination details and managing various other ICAR projects. Laurence hails from Port-au-Prince, and while the current situation in Haiti has understandably dampened her ever-present

cheerfulness, Laurence continues to actively support the ICAR community, holding her dual position as assistant to ICAR Director, Andrea Bartoli and to ICAR's financial manager Jeremy Peizer.

Leadership, program management, and policy design has clearly been an integral part of Laurence's skills and studies. During her internship with the State Department's Western

Hemisphere Affairs division, she drafted in-house policy papers on asylum issues. As staff for Engaging Governments on Genocide Prevention (EGGP) she helped coordinate two annual conferences and has been an active participant in the Latin America and Gender working groups. With a special focus on religious sources of forgiveness and reconciliation, her course work included identity and religion and conflict. Laurence will graduate from the Master's program this semester. Recently, she was nominated, by ICAR, for the Presidential Management Fellowship and is currently undergoing the multi-leveled requisite tests in this prestigious competition with the goal of eventually working as a U.S. Foreign Service Officer.

Aside from her work and studies, Laurence is an avid reader and an accomplished writer. In 2001, she published "Etat d' Ame" a book of poetry written in English and French, and in 2003 she published a French novel, *Amelia*. Both books are published in Haiti.

Laurence wishes to express her heart-felt thanks and appreciation for all the help and generosity by the ICAR community during these difficult times. ■



Laurence Gehy. Photo: Creative Services, GMU.

As the tragic situation unfolded, in the aftermath of the earthquake in Haiti, the ICAR community reached out to support its members who were directly affected by the disaster. ICAR News is pleased to highlight these students and their significant contributions to the ICAR community. We wish their families well and want to express our appreciation for all of the efforts in support of Haitian survivors and their families. For information on how to help see: icar.gmu.edu/crisis_haiti.html. The spotlight section is designed to highlight accomplishment within the ICAR community. Suggestions for future spotlights are welcome and can be forwarded to the Editor at icarnews@gmu.edu. ■

Copenhagen Climate Conference

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Diane Perlman and daughter at COP 15. Dr. Perlman is a Visiting Scholar at ICAR. Photo: Diane Perlman.

year, Tina Monberg, a Danish member of Mediators Beyond Borders (MBB) posed this question to Kenneth Cloke, the president of MBB, who applied to the UN for accreditation, becoming the only dispute resolution organization approved for Non-Governmental Observer status at COP 15.

Over the decades, I have noticed that very often those who possess the most relevant bodies of knowledge and essential skills are generally absent where needed most. There are always doctors, lawyers, religious and business leaders, environmentalists, politicians, and a variety of activists weighing in. But where are the conflict resolution practitioners? Monberg and Cloke's vision is a first step in bringing the field to the table.

MBB's goals for COP15 were to learn as much as possible about environmental conflicts, to raise awareness and look for avenues for intervention, to make connections, and to advocate for the inclusion of language recommending mediation as an option to facilitate problem-solving and conflict transformation.

Various levels, layers, and types of conflicts relating to global warming are associated with different causes, consequences, and solutions. In this case, a top down approach is critical, as "primary conflicts" or "megaconflicts" generate preventable contention. By intervening at fulcrum levels, we

can perhaps prevent, slow, or reduce the otherwise inevitable cascade of conflict.

Examples of conflict-generating contentions are those brewing between developed and developing countries, Democrats and Republicans, and central governments and local authorities. Additionally, corporations, oil companies, factory farms, and the coal industry are in conflict with communities, small farmers, and public health concerns. The desire for cheap energy, fossil fuels, and profits (ignoring hidden costs), and an attachment to our way of life, block the political will needed to transform systems and infrastructure.

Forces of habit, old ways of thinking, ignorance, fear of loss, sacrifice and inconvenience, denial, disinformation, and cynicism fuel a hostile resistance to advocates and those most vulnerable and eager for change. Also interfering with recognition of the problem, and the political will to address it, is the astonishing question over whether climate change is even happening. This "controversy" has captured public attention, serving as a dangerous distraction, and a tragic waste of time.

In addition to the chaotic weather patterns caused by global warming, rising temperatures fuel human chaos and the escalation of conflict, as clashes arise between neighboring villages over farming practices, contamination, water use, scarce resources, and the great misfortune of being downstream or downwind. Looming on the horizon is the potential conflict generated by hundreds of millions of environmental refugees.

A top down approach to conflict cascades must begin with the UN and its flawed system. MBB's, Kenneth Cloke, has outlined the following line of reasoning for addressing the problem:

- We currently face problems that cannot be solved locally, by a consortium of nation states, by any international organization, including

the UN, or through force or litigation.

- Conflicts exist between nations, political groups, and organizations, regarding the problem's existence, definition, and solutions. These conflicts interfere with timely solutions.

- Current mechanisms are incapable of solving these conflicts expediently or effectively, and failure to solve them will be catastrophic. The answer lies in communication and international collaboration.

- All sources of conflict need to be addressed, as well as resistance to systemic change at all levels. For this to happen, we need to increase our skills in cross-cultural communications, prejudice reduction and bias awareness, informal problem solving, group facilitation, public dialogue, collaborative negotiation, mediation, and conflict resolution systems design.

During COP15, approximately 25 MBB members met each day to strategize and debrief. We also conducted a seminar with 60 international mediators from 20 countries, and studied a range of emerging climate conflicts. Through our pioneering efforts at the Bella Center, we evolved as a team and generated significant interest in conflict mediation. We made over a thousand contacts, including: Archbishop Desmond Tutu; Ivo DeBoer, chief COP negotiator; Noble Peace Prize Winner Wangari Mathai; and many others.

In the aftermath of Copenhagen, MBB is on a steep learning curve, analyzing diplomatic processes, preparing for COP 16 in Mexico, exploring partnerships (including ICAR), and preparing a guide on environmental conflict and mediation strategies. I



Mediators Beyond Borders team members meet at the Bella Center. Photo: Diane Perlman.

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Copenhagen Climate Conference

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am personally proposing a parallel to the IPCC—the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change that shared the Noble Peace Prize with Al Gore, an IPMCC—an Interdisciplinary Panel on Mediating Environmental Conflicts.

In the absence of effective strategies to address the interlocking layers of conflict in Copenhagen, conflict escalated, as the powerful promoted artificial solutions, and concerned bystanders feared for humanity's fate. As Achim Steiner, Executive Director, UN Environment Programme noted, "This whole meeting is about facilitating away from conflict. Climate change is exacerbating and enhancing flash-points of conflict."

It is crucial, as a field, to recognize our profound and specific responsibility. It is up to us to rise to this challenge. If we do not, conflicts will unnecessarily escalate, and seal the fate of civilization. The stakes are as high as they can be. There is a void to be filled. We are needed. The time is now, and thanks to the efforts of MBB, the door is open.

For more information on Mediators Beyond Borders, visit their website at: www.mediatorsbeyondborders.org, or contact Dr. Perlman directly. ■

Citizen Diplomacy Class

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As a spiritual yet non-religious American—raised by a Christian mother and a Jewish father—I was grateful to learn from a wise Muslim leader about our common values and the good we can do to create better relationships in both Syria and the United States, regardless of our backgrounds or belief systems.

Our temporary high from the exchange with the Grand Mufti was soon tempered by the news that some of the Mufti's comments, regarding his unwillingness to advocate violence towards Jews or Christians, even if commanded by the Prophet Mohammad, were broadcast by the media and interpreted as anti-Islam by some radical Muslims who then spread their criticisms of the Mufti virally on European jihadist blogs. Ironically, the Grand Mufti's words were also picked up by Israeli Army Radio, and resulted in a positive article featured in Haaretz's online publication.

Over the next week, we wrestled with the lessons of do no harm (or the more realistic version that Gopin proposes of doing less harm than the good that is generated), and the potential pitfalls of engaging the media in peace building. Yet, once the media was involved, we had the choice to either answer or sit back. Some of us chose to respond in newspapers and on television, under the artful guidance of Hind Kabawat and Dr. Gopin. It is difficult to measure the full impact of our meeting with the Grand Mufti at this point, but we have an opportunity to learn from it and consider how to move forward in this work together. Challenges are good, and in the end we parted ways, humbled by the depth of the relationships we created in a mere 8 days, and the potential that lies ahead. ■



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Reflections on Syria: Developing A Cadre of Citizen Diplomats

By Marc Gopin, ICAR Professor and Director, Center for World Religions, Diplomacy, and Conflict,
mgopin@gmu.edu

With an entourage of twenty graduate students I walked down the cold cobblestone streets of the Old City Damascus in mid-January of 2010, still amazed by the reality of the situation. For many years I have traveled alone into this world, in between enemies, in between Syria, the United States, and Israel, crossing borders quietly, with great trepidation and enormous inexperience. The practice of citizen diplomacy in Syria has been one of a carefully choreographed dance with politicians, wonderful peace partners,

and religious figures where every word determined the health or destruction of both social and political relationships. I have engaged in this work solely with my Syrian counterpart, Hind Kabawat, and we both did this unsupported, unfunded, and at significant financial loss. But this year we opened our work up to a much more public process. It included



Syria's Grand Mufti, Sheikh Ahmad Hassoun, honors Dr. Gopin for his six years of inter-faith work in Syria with the Grand Mufti of Damascus looking on. Photo: Omar Alkhiami.

Masters and Ph.D. students from George Mason's Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution, Georgetown University, American University, and the Fletcher School. I combined my twenty students in a classroom with Hind's ten Syrian students, and the outcome was extraordinary. The Syrian and Mason students developed an

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- 6 Spotlight: In Memoriam: J. David Singer, "Parent of the Field," 1925-2009

Commentary

Pursuing a Practice of Peacebuilding

A Conversation With ICAR Alumna, Cynthia Irmer

By Mike Giusti, ICAR M.S. Student and Graduate Student Services Assistant, mgiusti1@gmu.edu

With the school year quickly coming to a close, an atmosphere of uncertainty is pervasive as another cohort prepares to graduate. Reflecting on the experiences and knowledge gained, how does one negotiate these in such a way as to confidently move forward into what can sometimes seem an ambiguous future? Where do I go? What do I do? What CAN I do? Fortunately, ICAR has an extensive network of successful alumni such as Cynthia Irmer to turn to for practical advice on such matters.

After years of practicing law, Cynthia Irmer returned to school to get her Ph.D. at ICAR. In her own words, "ICAR changed my life, it gave me words to express thoughts, and permission to creatively question the unthinkable." As a result of her education at ICAR, Dr. Irmer was able to pursue her passion for exploring non-abusive ways to better the human condition, and consider the simple notion that not all conflict is negative. With such tools in hand, she was equipped to utilize and implement a diverse range of conflict analysis and resolution principles in her position with the State Department's newly created Office of the Coordinator

for Reconstruction and Stabilization.

Serving as a Senior Conflict Prevention Officer, Dr. Irmer uses an elicitive model to frame the government lens through which she analyzes the dynamics of conflict life cycles. Moreover, she has been able to successfully employ certain theoretical models to establish the now government-wide Interagency Conflict Analysis Framework (ICAF), which enables members of seemingly disparate agencies to support one another and work together toward creatively constructing more effective approaches to conflict.

As of April, the ICAF model will have been applied in fourteen different conflict

areas in the world, and serves as the only comprehensive conflict prevention program in the U.S. government. Dr. Irmer's most recent work has been with the Liberia ICAF, whose team is currently on the ground conducting interviews and briefing various Armed Forces Commands. Prior to the team's deployment, she invited them to ICAR for a planning meeting that brought area experts together for a brainstorming session.



Cynthia Irmer, ICAR Ph.D. alumna and Senior Conflict Prevention Officer at the Department of State. Photo: courtesy of C. Irmer.

"Everyone is an expert in something, you just have to find it, work with it, develop it slowly, build it for yourself, and get your foot in the door somewhere."

—CYNTHIA IRMER

Hoping that this particular ICAF will make a difference in consensus building that other assessment tools could not produce, Irmer says, "it is vital to master the process of articulation." By that, she means taking the theory produced by academics and transforming it into more accessible language for everyday citizens, "Academics and policy makers are brilliant, but the ordinary people that are being affected are not on that level." Her prescription for such transformation

is to elicit a solution from the people.

Similarly, Dr. Irmer recommended that ICAR students generate their own solutions while mastering individual processes. "Everyone is an expert in something," she told me, "you just have to find it, work with it, develop it slowly, build it for yourself, and get your foot in the door somewhere." How does one do that? "Be willing to take low pay for a while, volunteer overseas with smaller NGOs, and take advantage of the alumni network for informational interviews." In other words, be creative and remember that not all conflict, (specifically the struggle to apply what you've learned and build opportunities for practice), is bad! ■

network

Career Services Offers Upcoming Career Intensives

March 19: "Careers in Community and Organizational Conflict," featuring David Smith, U.S. Institute of Peace; Patricia Maulden, Assistant Professor of Conflict Resolution and Director of the Dialogue and Difference Project at ICAR; and Wanda Wigfall-Williams, Assistant Professor, American University and President, World View Management Group.

April 9: "Careers in International Development" featuring panelists Dave Alpher, ICAR Ph.D. Student, Adjunct Faculty, development contractor in Iraq with ARD; Ramon Daubon, InterAmerican Foundation; and Michael J. Miklaucic, United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Participation in Career Intensives is by application only. To apply send your resume to toicarjob@gmu.edu, or see the ICAR Career Services page at: <http://icar.gmu.edu>. ■

"The Parents of the Field": Archiving Project to be Featured on ICAR's Website

By Christopher Mitchell, Ph.D., Professor Emeritus at ICAR, cmitchel@gmu.edu

The field of Conflict Analysis and Resolution is a relative newcomer to academia, with its roots reaching back to the era immediately after the Second World War and the onset of the "Cold War."

While many of the leading figures of that pioneering era are still contributing to the ever-expanding body of work in a fledgling field, several others are "getting on in years." All have important narratives to share about those early days, when it was a struggle just to get a course on "Post-Conflict Peace-building" or "Second Track Intervention" into curricula that were typically dominated by balance of power theories or thinking about "the unthinkable" (aka nuclear war).

For the past seven years, there has been an ongoing effort to obtain interviews with that earlier generation, the "Parents of the Field," who are now passing from the scene, and to make the results of those interviews available to the current and rising generations of scholars, scholar-practitioners, and students of conflict analysis and resolution. The idea for the archiving initiative was originally conceived by ICAR alumnus, Dr. Jannie Botes, now Director of the Program on Negotiation and Conflict Management (CNCM) at the University of Baltimore. Botes, who had previously had a career in television with the South African Broadcasting Corporation, was convinced of the need to record the views and memories of this pioneering generation while they were still accessible. He approached me with the idea and enlisted my help for the project.

Supported by a small grant from the Hewlett Foundation, we spent a good deal of time, between 2002 and 2007, crisscrossing the U. S.

and parts of Europe, carrying a video camera and sound recording equipment along the way, in search of our academic progenitors. Together we interviewed as many "parents of the field" as we could

persuade to talk to us for an hour or two, about the developing field of the 1950s and 1960s, about the world of the Cold War and decolonization, and about institution building (and institution collapsing) in the U.S., Scandinavia, Canada, Britain, and Europe. Once the conversations were collected, our team arranged for the videos to be transcribed and edited, and for the transcriptions to be checked for misspellings, mis-hearings, and misinterpretations.

Finally the fruits of this work are becoming available, on the ICAR and CNCM websites, and as part of Guy and Heidi Burgess' "Beyond Intractability" website. The project includes more than 30 interviews. The first of the video interviews, with their edited transcripts, will be available for viewing, beginning with Elise Boulding, on April 7th, followed by Morton Deutsch, Tony De Reuck. and J. David Singer, who is best known for his work on the "Correlates of War" project. Subsequent interviews, which will be uploaded as they become available, will include conflict analysis and resolution pioneers like: Johan Galtung, John Burton, Dean Pruitt, Betty Reardon, Hanna Newcombe, Herb Kelman, Adam Curle, and Roger Fisher.

Also in the works are two journal articles based on the insights we gained from the project; one on the early history of the field and another on the themes that emanated from the interviews themselves. It has been a long and arduous project, and the hope is that the results will be interesting and worthwhile to the beneficiaries of this rich academic legacy. ■



"Parents of the Field" project leads, Dr. Jannie Botes, ICAR alumnus, and Dr. Christopher Mitchell, ICAR Professor Emeritus. Photo: Paul Snodgrass



"Parents of the Field" created by Paul Snodgrass on wordle.net.

initiatives

CRDC Hosts Dr. Lewis Kriesberg

"Obama, Conflict, and Mediating the Israeli/Palestinian Conflict"

By Abraham C. Houben, ICAR M.S. Student, ahouben@gmu.edu

EVENTS

Introduced by host Dr. Marc Gopin, Director of ICAR's Center for World Religions, Diplomacy and Conflict Resolution, as one of the founding fathers of the field of conflict resolution, Dr. Louis Kriesberg spoke about the Obama Administration's policies on the Middle East and efforts at mediation during a visit to ICAR on Friday, March 5th.

"The new administration has changed some direction and shied away from Bush's failing policies in the Middle East," he stated. However, he also noted that it is questionable whether or not President Obama's speech in Cairo and his meeting with Jewish-American groups displays enough effort to make significant improvements in the relationship between Israel and Palestine. Dr. Kriesberg provided his audience with some food for thought when he stated, "A broader perspective is needed to reduce the asymmetry that currently exists. There has to be a better focus on social-emotional relationships between Israelis and Palestinians." Kriesberg wants to focus on the positive things that exist in the region and commonalities between the people, much like his observations during peace talks in South Africa. "When I met with both white and

black South Africans, they all loved to talk about how beautiful their country is." This, coming from a country whose conflict some thought would never end.

Kriesberg enjoyed recounting anecdotes from his latest trip to the region, as well as reflecting on experiences where he encountered ordinary Palestinian people being humiliated while attempting to cross an Israeli checkpoint. He recalled that he sat back as he noted that older generations will swallow this humiliation, but this same humiliation by Israeli Defense Forces generates vast amounts of anger among younger Palestinians.



Dr. Lewis Kriesberg at CRDC presentation. Photo: R. Grimm.

"We must aim to get to a point where laws are enforced without being provocative," he said, before going on to mention his thoughts on how human beings should be treated with respect and not be dehumanized and humiliated, creating even deeper divides across enemy lines.

The discussion turned to the importance of focusing on implementing real and lasting solutions for issues in the Middle East, rather than simply managing the conflict. Dr. Kriesberg pointed to the role that the international community, specifically Turkey and Egypt, could have on the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. Kriesberg commented that it is a shame that the Palestinian Authority was denied admission to the World Trade Organization. Had it been accepted into the WTO, there would have been a new level of interaction between Israeli and Palestinian people, an interaction that could have become part of a strong peacebuilding foundation.

Dr. Kriesberg implored audience members to "Learn from previous mistakes and keep trying different angles." At one point during the discussion, modesty abounded, as Kriesberg sat back and joked that he doesn't have all of the answers. Regardless of this, his intelligent mix of compassionate storytelling and penetrating insight into past and present conflicts highlighted the reasons why he has been, and always will be, an invaluable leader in the field. As such, Dr. Kriesberg is being featured in the Parents of the Field project (see article on page 3). Dr. Kriesberg's presentation will be available online on ICAR's website. ■

Upcoming ICAR Community Events

Friday, March 19, 2010

Career Intensive

10:00 am - 4:00 pm, Truland Building, 555

Tuesday, March 23, 2010

Terrorism: A Panel Discussion & Dialogue

7:00 pm - 9:00 pm, Fairfax Campus, Sub II, Ballroom 1

Friday, March 26, 2010

Grad Student Etiquette Dinner

5:45 pm - 9:00 pm, Original Building, 329

Friday, April 9, 2010

Career Intensive

10:00 am - 4:00 pm, Truland Building, 555

Friday, April 16, 2010

Undergraduate Spring Conference

Confronting Major Challenges in the 21st Century

10:00 am - 9:30 pm, Fairfax Campus, Johnson Center, Dewberry Hall

Thursday, April 29, 2010

ISA Town Hall Meeting

7:30 pm - 9:00 pm, Truland Building, 555

<http://icar.gmu.edu/events.htm>

ICAR STUDENT OPINION

Conflict Resolution, One Book at a Time

By Roi Ben-Yehuda, ICAR Ph.D. Student, rbenyehu@gmu.edu



Roi Ben-Yehuda, ICAR Ph.D. student. Photo: ICAR.

A basic fact of conflict is that people's perceptions of each other matter. Viewing someone as subhuman or demonic, for example, reduces people's inhibitions towards using violence against them. Likewise, negative images of the other escalate conflict through engendering fear, misunderstandings, blame, and zero-sum thinking.

Research conducted by psychologist Albert Bandura has demonstrated that individuals inflict much harsher punishments on people whom they view negatively, as opposed to people whom they perceive in neutral or sympathetic terms. Importantly, his experiment also showed that subjects invested with positive qualities were least likely to be harmed.

Because how we imagine others is consequential, it is essential for conflict resolution practitioners to find creative ways to mitigate the destructive influence of negative stereotypes. One approach to tackling this problem was developed by American psychologist Gordon Allport who argued that qualitative contact between conflicting groups is a meaningful way to reduce hostility and prejudice as well as cultivate more positive attitudes between group members. By qualitative contact, Allport meant direct interpersonal relations between participants of equal status who pursue common goals with the help of institutional support. Some great examples of contact theory put into practice are organizations like Seeds of Peace and bilingual Jewish-Arab schools in Israel such as Hand in Hand.

While personal contact is key to transforming threatening images of the enemy, unfortunately, it is not always a possibility. This is because people, particularly during times of conflict, may not be able to meet face-to-face. Obstacles to contact can include restrictions on travelling, legal concerns, or physical danger. Moreover, even if people are able to meet, the contact itself may feel too threatening or emotionally taxing.

In such circumstances, the problem of perception needs to be addressed through other means. One such approach is engagement with literature—a type of vicarious contact theory.

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Recent ICAR Articles, Op-Eds, Letters to the Editor

Israeli Identity Formation and the Arab-Israeli Conflict in Election Platforms, 1969 - 2006

By Neta Oren, ICAR Visiting Scholar

Journal of Peace Research, Vol. 47 No. 2, March 2010

Proximity Talks Should be Maximized

By Rawhi Afaghani, ICAR Ph.D. Candidate

Al Arabiya News Channel, 2/11/10

Why Should Israel Care What the Rest of the World Thinks?

By Roi Ben-Yehuda, ICAR Ph.D. Student

Harretz.com, 2/16/10

When Development Meets Culture and Conflict: The Challenges and Paradoxes of the Good Samaritan

By Adriana Salcedo, ICAR Ph.D. Student

Journal of Peacebuilding and Development, Vol. 5 No. 1, December 2009

ICAR Blog Roll

A Blog for Peace in Israel-Palestine

By Aziz Abu Sarah, CRDC Director of Middle East Projects

<http://azizabusarah.wordpress.com/>

Confrontations: Forays Into Political Life as it Happens

By Solon Simmons, ICAR Faculty

<http://solonsimmons.wordpress.com/>

Gone Public: Philosophy, Politics, & Public Life

By Nöelle McAfee, ICAR Visiting Faculty

<http://gonepublic.wordpress.com/>

Instruments of Peace: Communiqués on Conflict, Peace, and Social Justice

By Ethan Finley, ICAR Ph.D. Student

<http://ethanfinley.blogspot.com/>

Marc Gopin.com: Confronting the Challenges Facing Humanity

Marc Gopin, ICAR Faculty

<http://www.marcgopin.com/>

Teach for Peace: Principled, Practical Policy Analysis From a Peace Educator in the Writing Classroom of a Juvenile Detention Home School

Cheryl Duckworth, ICAR Adjunct Faculty

<http://teachforpeace.blogspot.com/>

press

In Memoriam: J. David Singer

"Parent of the Field" 1925-2009

By Christopher Mitchell, Ph.D., Professor Emeritus at ICAR, cmitchel@gmu.edu

icar spotlight

The field of conflict and peace studies lost another pioneering and path breaking founder when Emeritus Professor David Singer died just after Christmas as a result of a car accident last September.

David Singer was one of the group of social scientists who helped launch the new field of conflict analysis—as well as the *Journal of Conflict Resolution*—at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, in the mid 1950s. However, unlike many of the others in that extraordinary group – Kenneth and Elise Boulding, Herb Kelman, Dean Pruitt, Richard Snyder—all of whom moved on, Singer stayed on at U Mich and helped make it one of the key centers of scholarship for the new field.

Although he could write with wit, knowledge, and insight about arms control, strategic issues, social science methodology, and peace research in general, David Singer was best known for his work on the “Correlates of War” project. Building on the earlier work of Quincy Wright and Wright’s massive (and pre-computer) “Study of War,” David and his historian colleague, Melvin Small, determined that the theoretical assertions of international relations’ “balance of power” theorists tended to be anecdotal at best and in need of testing against systematically gathered, comparative data. In the “CoW” Project, Singer and Small set out to gather carefully defined, carefully categorized, and carefully measured data on all wars and war related phenomena (alliances, military expenditures, demographics) post-1815, in order to see what actually correlated with the various types of war that had take place during the period after Napoleon.

Facing criticism from traditional historians as well as from some of his own colleagues in the field—who were happy at the hypothesis proposing aspects of theory but unwilling to go to the data collection and hypothesis testing stage—David defended his ideas and resultant findings with gusto and much humor. The CoW project continues at the University of Illinois to this day, and its influ-



J. David Singer pictured with Kenneth Boulding. Photo: courtesy of Diane Macaulay.

ence endures in its many offspring, not the least of which is the Conflict Data Program at Uppsala University and their annual “States in Armed Conflict” reports.

In many ways, Dave Singer’s legacy to our field also survives, as he was constantly requiring that conflict and peace studies should proceed on the basis of clarity of argument, rigor of definition, and above all the support of empirical evidence for theoretical statements. His many colleagues will miss his critical eye, friendly dissent, and huge sense of humor. Fortunately, Jannie Botes and I managed a long video interview with him three years ago for our “Parents of the Field” project, so future generations will soon be able to get some measure of him as a scholar and as a generous human being.

I was looking forward to having a drink and a good laugh with him at this year’s International Studies Association meeting, but now—much to my sorrow—I won’t.

—CRM.

Dr. Singer is survived by his wife, Diane Macaulay, his daughters Katie and Annie Singer, his grandchildren Kayla and Jake—and as Diane remarked, “he belongs to the entire discipline.” ■

Gehey and Jennings Express Gratitude for Support

ICAR students, Laurence Gehey and Yves-Renée Jennings, who were featured in the ICAR Spotlight section of the February edition of ICAR News, have asked that we extend their thanks and appreciation for the emotional support offered to them by the ICAR community and for the financial support contributed on behalf of their families in the aftermath of the devastating earthquake in Haiti. Both of their families are well and rebuilding. As we go to press Jennings is in Haiti working with groups of displaced children.—The Editor ■

Reflections on Citizen Diplomacy in Syria

Continued from page 1



Marc Gopin is a professor at ICAR and Director of the Center for World Religions, Diplomacy, and Conflict. Photo: GMU Creative Services.

intensive and amazingly close working social network of partnerships, and a level of emotional bonding that astonished both me and Hind. It has resulted in a Syrian/American alliance of alumni dedicated to small projects creation and mutual aid in the development of a social network for peacebuilding, and other joint projects of positive social change.

The week of intensive training in Damascus combined class lectures, joint innovative project creation, as well as high level meetings with significant figures in Syria, including Dr. Bouthaina Shaban, and Michel Smacha, Presidential Advisors, and the President of Damascus University. The week also included a special meeting with the Grand Mufti of Syria, Sheikh Hassoun, as well as the Grand Mufti of Damascus, and the Chief of the Religious Legal Courts (Sharia Courts) of Syria. That meeting was an emotional reunion for me and Sheikh Hassoun, a heartfelt review of the results of the devastating wars of the region, which we both had tried to prevent. Iraq has always been front and center, and the Grand Mufti of Syria had simple and profound messages for President Obama as to where the United States should put its future efforts in the region. It became a joint

call for life-affirming American contributions to the region and its suffering refugees, with wonderful student engagement with the Mufti. In all my 27 years of interfaith peace work in the region, never have I seen such a high level and profound engagement of shared humanity as was expressed in that room with the Grand Mufti. To see so many prominent clergy weeping together with students over the losses of children to war in the region was the greatest testimony I have ever witnessed to the true spirit of Islam and the Abrahamic Faiths.

Students were astonished at how quickly they would become immersed in and responsible for high level meetings and the mechanics, challenges, and surprising breakthroughs of citizen diplomacy, all under the watchful and quixotic eye of Middle Eastern media, including Iran's television stations. They did not just study citizen diplomacy. After an intensive interview process to be accepted into the program, they were quickly called upon to be diplomats themselves, agents of positive change, in highly sensitive and challenging environments. They were also treated to a night out at the opera by the Spanish Ambassador, in addition to celebrations with their fellow students almost every night, a dinner sponsored by the United States Embassy, and a beautiful dinner at the ancient home of Hind and Samer Kabawat in the Old City.

When you go to places and you make yourself vulnerable and listen, you learn much more than you can learn in books. This is the opportunity I wanted to extend to the participating students. Even the most eloquently articulated narrative in a book cannot compare to

the students' experience of sitting before the Grand Mufti of Syria and hearing his words of unity and peace and optimism about a different future. No written narrative could likewise portray the range of emotions students might experience as they leave one of the most incredible religious experiences of their lives, only to find out within 24 hours that some members of the media, and numerous jihadi websites, had manipulated words of peace and love into that of religious heresy. The students were on the front lines of a public relations battle and stepped up to the plate passionately in response to the media through written and verbal interviews, and online responses. The students were afforded a hands-on introduction to the challenges of "doing peace" in the context of political and social realities on the ground that are less than desirable.

The week of study and touring of cultural and religious sites culminated in the Syrian students' gala graduation celebration, attended by a number of Syrian dignitaries and embassy representatives, especially from Spain, the EU, and the United States. Plans for the future include a similar course to be held in Israel and Palestine this summer and next year's program of new students and citizen diplomacy tourism to the region, videos, op-eds, and the development of an international social network of students committed to conflict resolution and citizen diplomacy. ■



Dr. Gopin with the Grand Mufti of Syria, the Grand Mufti of Damascus, the Head of Shari'a Courts, and GMU and Syrian students. Photo: Omar Alkhiami.

ICAR Student Opinion

Continued from page 5

The novelist Iris Murdoch once said that the purpose of literature is to “prove that other people really exist”, meaning that literature calls on people to generously insert themselves into the lives of others. In so doing, books (especially those that deal with the problem of dehumanization) can help children and adults to (re)-develop their capacity for broad empathy and sympathy.

Echoing and amplifying this idea, the philosopher Martha Nussbaum has written: “Narrative art has the power to make us see the lives of the different with more than the casual tourist’s interest—with involvement and sympathetic understanding, with anger at our society’s refusal at visibility.”

Highbrow as it may seem, there is empirical evidence to back up the pro-social value of literature. In the United States, for example, studies done with white elementary school students have shown that reading stories with multi-ethnic and multi-racial characters significantly reduces negative perceptions and attitudes. Other studies found that reading fiction (as opposed to non-fiction) correlates with a high level of empathy, and that putting yourself in other people’s shoes is one of the most effective ways of reducing stereotyping and in-group favoritism.

Reading novels and storytelling may seem like a poor substitute for person-to-person contact, and to some degree this is true. But, there are also advantages. Chief among them is that literature provides a uniquely safe space for identification. Moreover, contact on the pages of books also has the advantage of allowing the reader to withdraw—

emotionally and cognitively—when identification becomes too strenuous.

This is not to suggest that reading ought to replace direct contact, but rather that because an engagement with literature can prepare people psychologically for the difficult work of reconciliation, it should serve as a handmaiden to the practice of conflict resolution.

Some recommendations for incorporating literature into conflict resolution practices include selecting a canon of relevant literature. Books such as Elie Wiesel’s *Night*, George Orwell’s *Animal Farm*, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man*, Fawaz Turki’s *The Disinherited* and S. Yizhar’s *Khirbet Khizeh*, are some examples.

In addition, it is important to create guidelines—a springboard for discussion—so that the messages in the great books may be properly internalized. And where possible, it would be best to work with education ministries to develop a curriculum for widespread use in classrooms.

Alternatively, book clubs and workshops can be formed, both within communities and among conflicting parties—thus combining both direct and indirect contact.

To be sure, negative attitudes and perceptions of the other are not going to be altered overnight. However, if we are to prevent, manage, or transform conflicts it is essential that we find creative ways to do so. Reading literature is not a bad place to start.

Conflict resolution, one book at a time. ■

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