



## Peaceful Tomorrows International Conference September 5-11<sup>th</sup>, 2006



**Arrivals from around the world** marked the beginning of September 11<sup>th</sup>. Families for Peaceful Tomorrows' International Conference at the Garrison Institute on September 5<sup>th</sup>. In opening remarks, Peaceful Tomorrows' Director David Potorti stressed the group's longstanding focus on civilian casualties, and his excitement at what the participants would learn from each other and teach the rest of the world. Father Michael Lapsley of

South Africa led three of our international participants in a **guided telling of their stories**: Nakayama Takamitsu of Japan, who survived the atomic bombing of Nagasaki; Robi Damelin of Israel, who lost her son to a Palestinian sniper; and Jean Baptiste Ntakirutimana, who lost his extended family in the Rwandan genocide. Each discussed his or her journey from grief to activism. In **small group sessions** that followed, all participants were given time to



share their stories and engage in dialogue with each other. Additional small group work gave participants the opportunity to focus on successes and challenges facing their own organizations, with an eye toward common themes and actions. Venerable folksinger **Pete Seeger** paid us a special visit to share his own mix of warmth, humor and activism with songs like "Rainbow Race." Day Two activities dealt with **developing the network's main areas of focus**. In sessions large and small, participants considered how they could bring their local experiences to

bear on the larger network. A volunteer drafting committee gathered to distill the network's mission and goals from the input of the entire assembly. It included Jean Baptiste Ntakirutimana, Cherifa Kheddar (Algeria), Marcia Scantlebury (Chile), Robi Damelin, Jo Berry (UK) and David Potorti. The evening concluded with **music and dance** provided by a band of Woodstock musicians who welcomed audience participation on digery do, African drums, keyboards and song. It was a truly international experience!





Day Three began with a panel focusing on the **challenges and rewards of creating international networks**. **Liz Bernstein** discussed her long involvement with the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (for which Founding Coordinator Jody Williams won the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize), and her current efforts with the Nobel Women's Initiative, which addresses the root causes of violence by spotlighting and promoting the efforts of women's rights activists, researchers and organizations working to advance peace, justice and equality. **David**

**Hartsough** discussed his 40 years of nonviolent peacemaking and his current work as Executive Director of the San Francisco-based *Peaceworkers* as well as Co-Founder/Capacity Building Director of the *Nonviolent Peaceforce*. **Juan Gutierrez**, founder of the *Peace Research Center* in Guernica, Spain, shared his story of eliciting an offer of reconciliation and acknowledgement of responsibility for the 1937 bombings of that city from the German President, as well as his efforts in establishing contact among survivors of Dresden, Hiroshima, and the victims of the widespread struggles in Colombia and Guatemala.

Thoughts then turned toward **potential activities and structure** of the nascent network. Activities fell under the headings of **education** (using our personal stories to effect change, particularly among youth); **responding to new incidents of violence** (reaching out, supporting and empowering those affected);



**addressing issues of disarmament** (with an eye toward calling for swift abolition of nuclear weapons at the upcoming October UN conference); **healing the memories** of those affected by violence (including the creation of a database of stories and photos of victims of terrorism, violence and war; **political advocacy** (persuading governments to redirect monies from war-related activities to supporting human rights and needs); **promoting**

**nonviolence; using media effectively**; and sharing our skills in the area of **fundraising**. Two potential areas of action emerged, including efforts to support Afghan women in the face of Taliban resurgence, and the establishment of an international day of remembrance for victims of terrorism, violence and war.

In an effort to lay out a structure to advance the International Network in the short term, nominations from the floor were taken for an **interim steering committee**. Six delegates accepted nominations, and a motion was accepted to establish them as the committee. They included Afifa Azim (Afghanistan), Juan Gutierrez, Andrea LeBlanc (US), Jo Berry, Sofia Gaviria (Colombia), Jean Baptiste Ntakirutimana and David Potorti. In consultation, they established Potorti, representing Peaceful Tomorrows, as the interim chair of the committee, with Berry as associate chair. A short brainstorming session elicited names for the new network, and the committee was charged with making final recommendations. Efforts then turned toward polishing the statement of purpose from the drafting committee, and making it even more inclusive of the group as a whole.



We agreed on the following statement, which was read publicly for the first time on Amy Goodman's "Democracy Now" the following morning:

*"We are a global network of organizations comprised of people who lost loved ones to, or were directly affected by, war, nuclear weapons, terrorism, genocide, organized crime, and political violence. We work together to break the cycles of violence and revenge, and are committed to honoring the memories of the victims and to the dignity of the survivors.*

*Using our collective experience and skills, we are dedicated to identifying and addressing the root causes of violence, and to promoting non-violence as the most effective strategy for resolving conflict.*

*We pledge to support and amplify each other's efforts across diverse communities, recognizing that we derive our strength from our common experience of loss and our common hope for a world free from violence."*



Traveling to New York City for a series of public panel discussions in the days leading up to 9/11/06, participants found themselves facing attentive audiences. New York University's Center for Global Affairs hosted an interactive symposium around **"Grassroots Solutions to Intractable Problems"** moderated by Vera Jelinek, Assistant Dean and Director, Center for Global Affairs, and featuring Nobel Laureate Jody Williams. Small working groups were led by Afifa Azim, Robi Damelin, Julia Duany (Sudan), Fr. Michael Lapsley, and Jean Baptiste Ntakirutimana. Joining Williams

as respondents were Elizabeth Cole, Assistant Director of Education, Asia Society; Carolyn Kissane, Clinical Assistant Professor, NYU. Global Affairs; and Paul van Zyl, program director, International Center for Transnational Justice. Peaceful Tomorrows member Orlando Rodriguez, Department Chair, Director of the Hispanic Research Center at Fordham University, participated in a panel discussion entitled, "War or Peace: Drawing Hope From Tragedy." Moderated by Father Patrick Ryan, Vice President for University Mission and



Ministry, the panel included Jesus Abril Escusa (Spain), Cherifa Kheddar (Algeria), Father Romain Rurangirwa, and Jo Berry (UK). September Space, which serves a broad range of constituencies over issues arising from the 9/11 attacks, hosted a panel entitled, "Building Resiliency in the Aftermath of Tragedy." Beatriz Abril (Spain), Olga Takaeva (Russia), William Frazier (Ireland) and Marie Mitchell (US) joined Gerry Bogacz, World Trade Center Survivors Network; Flora Hogman, Holocaust survivor, and Samuel Smith, an evacuee from Hurricane Katrina. Attendees

headed to St. Paul's Chapel, across the street from the former site of the World Trade Center, for a **press conference** to announce the creation of their historic network, featuring Nobel laureate Jody Williams. The Episcopal Church became home to an extraordinary eight-month volunteer relief effort after the terrorist attacks of September 11th, 2001. Surrounded by their fellow delegates, conference participants Afifa Azim (Afghanistan), Robi Damelin, Nadwa Sananda (Palestine), Loretta Filipov (US), Father Michael Lapsley, Jean-Baptiste Ntakirutimana, and Beatriz Abril offered their observations on the new network and on the importance of international cooperation. Press from around the world posed questions to the assembled group as well as during private time after the press conference itself.



That evening, the Unitarian Church of All Souls hosted, **“Transcending Tragedy: Does Healing Require Forgiveness?”** moderated by Maria Volpe, Professor, John Jay College of Criminal Justice. Panelists included Jo Berry, Father Romain Rurangirwa, Sofia Gaviria and Andrea LeBlanc. An empty chair was left in honor of original panelist Naba Hamid (Iraq), whose unexpected visa difficulties made it impossible for her to leave the country. We take our peace where we can find it. On Saturday, September 9<sup>th</sup>, Battery Park was transformed into the site of

**“Yoga for Peace,”** an annual public event which this year included a welcome from Peaceful Tomorrows member Anthony Aversano. That evening, renowned talk show host **Phil Donahue** moderated a panel and town hall meeting entitled **“Civilian Casualties, Civilian Solutions”** at the New York Society for Ethical Culture and featuring Afifa Azim, Bud Welch (Oklahoma City), Fr. Romain Rurangirwa and David Potorti. Sunday, September 10<sup>th</sup> was a day of solidarity with others affected by the 9/11 attacks. It began with a generous invitation from **Voices of**



**September 11<sup>th</sup>** to several of our international participants, who spoke at their annual luncheon on a panel entitled, **“Transforming Tragedy: An International Perspective.”** Panelists included Olga Takaeva, Jo Berry and Bud Welch. A second panel on **“Getting Involved: 9/11 Family Advocacy”** featured Peaceful Tomorrows’ Anne Mulderry.



Father Lapsley and Father Romain joined John Leinung (US) in a presentation entitled, **“Healing Words: 9.11, Rwanda, Apartheid”** at the historic Lafayette Avenue Presbyterian Church in Brooklyn, which was a continual voice against slavery both before and during the Civil War. That evening, International Conference participants joined members of Peaceful Tomorrows, our supporters and funders at **Colors**, Manhattan's first cooperatively owned restaurant by former workers from the legendary Windows on The World, which once topped the North Tower of the WTC.

On September 11<sup>th</sup>, our international participants met at Columbia University’s School of International and Public Affairs for a series of small group discussions entitled, **“From**



**Afghanistan to Zimbabwe: Creative Responses to Violence.**" They assembled in a 15<sup>th</sup> floor conference room in which staff and students had gathered to look southward at the unfolding attacks of 9/11/01. After introductory remarks, Andrea Bartoli, Senior Research Scholar; Director, Center for International Conflict Resolution introduced Lisa Anderson, Dean of the School for International and Public Affairs and special guest Senator George Mitchell, Senior Fellow and Senior Research Scholar at Columbia's Center for International Conflict Resolution. Mitchell first led a commission which established the principles on non-violence to which all parties in Northern Ireland had to adhere, and subsequently chaired the all-party peace negotiations which led to the Belfast Peace Agreement,

signed on Good Friday, 1998. The intimate small group discussions that followed allowed students and members of the public to spend quality time with our international guests. There

were several other events on the 11<sup>th</sup>. **"Teaching Peace, Building Hope"** at El Puente in Brooklyn allowed our Spanish speakers to communicate in their native tongue with members of the community. El Puente founder Luis Garden Acosta moderated a panel which included Juan Gutierrez, Beatriz Abril, Irene Villa Gonzales, Marcia Scantlebury, and Anthony Aversano. **"Sudan to Chile: Women Waging Peace"** at the Church of the Holy Trinity in Manhattan considered the crucial role played by women in peacefully resolving conflict. Phoebe Griswold, Founding Member, Anglican Women's Empowerment and Wife of the Episcopal Presiding Bishop, moderated a panel which included Robi Damelin and Nadwa Sarandah, Jo Berry, Marcia Scantlebury, Julia Duany, Afifa Azim, and Terry Rockefeller (US).



At the **UN Church Center's Tillman Chapel**, directly across the street from the United Nations, members of our international network gathered for an event focused on commemoration of the lives lost on September 11<sup>th</sup>. In opening remarks, Cora Weiss, President, Hague Appeal for Peace, said, "Just as we called for a ceasefire for the war in Lebanon, we must call for a ceasefire in the war on terror. We will learn tonight of other ways to deal with anger and violence." Kathleen Stone, Chaplain, welcomed the international guests to offer up a word with special meaning to them on the commemoration of September 11<sup>th</sup>. Delegates included Cherifa Kheddar, who chose "Memory"; Febby Isran (Indonesia), who chose "Peace"; William Frazier, who chose "Future," Viviana Mantragola (Italy), who chose "Commitment," Irene Villa Gonzalez (Spain), who chose "Share," and Nakayama Talamitsu (Japan), who observed that "Life is Treasure." Each offered a personal reflection in their native tongue, and then lit a candle on an altar. Two events closed our activities on September 11<sup>th</sup>: a Columbia University panel entitled, **"From Tragedy to Transformation: Alternative Responses to Violence,"** hosted by Tony Jenkins, Director of Research and Administration from the Peace Education Center at Teacher's College. It featured Raed Jarrar (Iraq), Beatriz Abril, Julia Duany, and Terry Rockefeller. Immediately following the panel, those in attendance joined in creating a "living memorial" honoring the victims of 9/11 and



celebrating the creative non-violent alternative visions that provide hope for a more peaceful tomorrow. The second brought a sellout crowd to the Jewish Community Center: a special showing of the film "**Encounter Point**," which focuses on the commonality of loss and the efforts of bereaved families to break the cycles of violence. Panelists included Robi Damelin and Nadwa Sarandah of the Parents Circle, Peaceful Tomorrows member Colleen Kelly, and the filmmakers themselves. As the September 11<sup>th</sup> commemorations ended, so began a long series of goodbyes to our international guests. Father Lapsley would remain in New York to host a "Healing of Memories" workshop; that Thursday, a performance of "**Lemkin's House**," the award-winning play about Raphael Lemkin, the man who coined the term "genocide," was discussed by a panel including Jean-Baptiste Ntakirutimana, who lost his entire family to the Rwandan genocide, Sofia Correa, Father Lapsley, Ambassador Dr. Chem Widhya of Cambodia and Peaceful Tomorrows member Adele Welty. Other conference participants would travel to the Boston area through the following weekend to participate in panel discussions at Club Passim in Harvard Square; the Fifth annual Al Filipov Peace & Justice Forum in Concord, initiated by Peaceful Tomorrows member Loretta Filipov to honor her late husband; and at a showing of the film, "Seeds" at the Brattle Theater in Cambridge.