

## Community Institutes on Peace Education-May 21<sup>st</sup>, 2010

What do a director of youth programs, a community artist in residence, a professor of teacher education and an actress have in common? They were participants in the first ever Connecticut based Community Institutes on Peace Education held at the Lyceum in Hartford, CT May 21<sup>st</sup>, 2010. Thirty-six participants gathered, having gone through a rigorous selection and registration process, for a “learn-in”, a day of sharing and reflection. The theme-“Building a Hopeful World: Transformative Endeavors in Making a Difference” was an apt one, given the extensive experiences, enthusiasm and creativity expressed by participants through the morning plenary and interests groups twice during the day. We all helped to create a day-long *conversation*, leading to new connections among and between us and developed a community throughout the course of the day. Following are some introductory remarks that Mary Lee Morrison made at the opening of the day. We welcome comments and thoughts on the day, for those who were there and those who couldn't make it and wish more information on CIPE's and IPE (International Institute on Peace Education). You can go to: <http://www.nationalpeaceacademy.us/>. To sign up for the CIPE list serve, go to [cipe-hartford+subscribe@i-i-p-e.org](mailto:cipe-hartford+subscribe@i-i-p-e.org)

### **Below-Morning Plenary**



*What is a CIPE? Quite simply, a CIPE is an intentional learning community with the built in goal of transformation as an outcome. What is transformation? Noted peace educator Betty Reardon, founder of the IPE, describes it as “a deep change that affects the way we think, world views, values, relationships and social structures”. When we are open to new experiences and ways of thinking and being, we can open ourselves up to new possibilities. This is at the heart of peace education. Learning in this mode requires the participation of everyone, the hiding of no one, and the acceptance of all. Some of our goals for today include: providing*

*local support to each other for the work that we do, learning from each other about best practices, addressing current local and regional issues and to increase possibilities for affecting local and regional and, perhaps, national and international policies as well as increasing potential for new research and developments in peace and sustainability education.*

*Our deepest experiences are often rooted in community. It is through grass-roots, community based efforts that significant change has been and is made possible. We will hear many of these today through our sharing. A sense of belonging to a kinship of change makers is crucial to creating the sustainability for our work over the long haul.*

*Let me pose a few queries here and then answer some of them in my own way. What is peace? Is peace more than the absence of conflict or war? I would say yes, unequivocally, that peace implies that harmony and equality within and between individuals, communities, nations, implies that standards of justice must prevail, that everyone have access to the basic resources for life, for education and for the ability to actively question those in power who may be denying right to these resources.*

*What metaphors do you use for your concepts of peace and sustainability? I like the tree, although in many ways it is well worn. A tree of life stands tall, taking in all that it needs in a very simple process, and gives off shade, rest and beauty. The trees rings have some years of draught (translate spiritual emptiness, loss and grief), and some years of abundance. Each sustains the other.*

*What helps us vision for a better world? We start with the knowledge that most of the time we as individuals are peaceful. This new way of viewing the obvious I learned from my colleague and friend and mentor, Elise Boulding. Yet at the same time we know that, like a fish immersed in water, much of*

*the time our larger culture is one of war. We must be able to begin to step out of this enough to see other possibilities. I hope that days like today are a step along this process.*

*Conversation is at the heart of peace pedagogy. The Buddhist educator and philosopher Daisaku Ikeda has given us the words “through the workings of genuine dialogue, opposing perspectives are transformed from that which divides and sunders people into that which forges deeper union between them”. Peace education engages us with the deepest questions of our human existence and with ourselves and with others.*

*We must learn to move from an ethos of individualism to one of conversation, caring and compassion, as we seek, without enmity, to understand one another across the differences that divide us. Education must be at the forefront of such movements for building peace. This kind of education honors the creative spirit and energy of each individual, yet calls us, at the same time, into community. True peace and happiness begins with each of us as individuals, yet can only be fulfilled when each of us works conjointly for the happiness of others as much as for ourselves. It is in the constant connections with members of our human family that the true basis of peace lies. Good pedagogy is connected to a reverence for life and is rooted in life’s most diverse experiences.*

*George Bernard Shaw once said “you see things as they are and ask why? I see things as they might be and ask “why not?” So...enjoy a little time out of your busy schedule to have fun today. Let us begin to share our visions and learn from one another.*

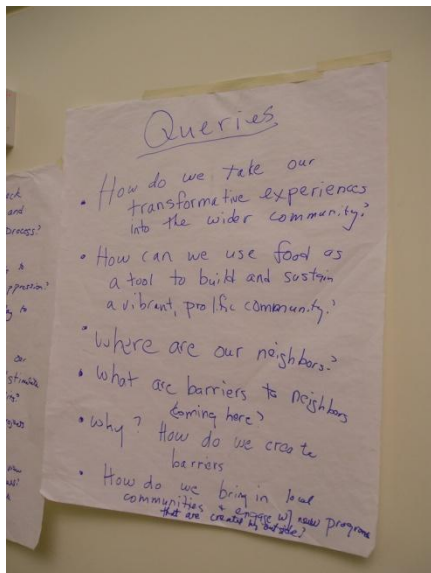
### Reflecting on Plenary

We are grateful to the funders for this wonderful day-the Asian Employee Resource Group of MassMutual Financial Group. The space for the CIPE was magnificent, the Cathedral Lyceum, located in the Frog Hollow neighborhood of Hartford, recently renovated and reflecting over 100 years of building use in education and community development.



Following the morning plenary and reflection groups, participants broke up into assigned interest groups for intensive sharing/learning. These were at the heart of the day, where networks and alliances were developed and friendships shared.

Lunch was provided by the Kitchen at Billings Forge, a farm to table catering service that is part of the Billings Forge Community Works, a Frog Hollow neighborhood initiative providing culinary training for neighborhood residents, among other development activities. Some of us were treated to a tour of the Billings Forge Community Works, including a talk with gardener Rita Decker-Parry and a view of the Studio-hosting musical, artistic and educational venues, all as part of revitalization efforts in Frog Hollow.



We ranged in age from high school to over 80 years old. Participants were overwhelmingly positive about the day, as reflected in the evaluations, citing the opportunities for cross-disciplinary networking and connecting. Folks came away with a more solid and grounded conceptual, working definition of peace education. There is strong sentiment to do another CIPE. Anyone interested in helping?

### Reflection Queries-Morning Plenary



Morning Introductory Ice Breaker