CREATORS OF PEACE a women's initiative

creating a culture of peace

what will it take?
Creating a culture of peace – what will it take?

From the moment delegates started arriving at The Collaroy Centre, on Sydney’s stunning north coast, there was a buzz in the air – the kind of energy that is generated when 235 women from over 30 countries come together to share their hearts and lives. We had gathered together to attend the 5th Creators of Peace International Conference which was about exploring ‘Creating a Culture of Peace – what will it take?’

Material for this report is taken from this conference, September 30-October 4, 2009.

In introduction, Vijayalakshmi Subrahmanyan from India, an international coordinator of Creators of Peace, gave some of the background to the movement:

‘The idea of Creators of Peace came from Anna Abdallah Msekwa of Tanzania. A respected leader and politician, she had attended many international conferences and UN forums. She had come to the world conference centre of Initiatives of Change in Caux, Switzerland. What she saw and heard from individuals and their commitment to world transformation through personal transformation, convinced her that it is a change in the hearts of people that makes the difference. She asked whether they could have a programme where ordinary women could have a part to play.

‘The inspiration came: Creators of Peace – A Women’s Initiative.

‘The first conference was in 1991 in Switzerland to which 720 delegates came from 63 countries and all continents. We were from all faith traditions, we were rich and poor. This is an idea which involves everyone, their hearts, hands and heads in the service of humanity. How do we break the chains of hate and revenge?

‘In these conferences and gatherings I have known women whose anger and hate melt away in the silence of listening to the inner voice. Many who have come with their personal agendas have learnt to put that aside in order to listen to the other’s agenda.

‘Transformation comes as women turn the searchlight of truth on their own motives and prejudices and take the steps of change revealed.

‘Through listening and change we build bridges of trust and friendship across the chasms of difference.’

The Creators of Peace organizers wish to thank all those who sponsored the conference and subsequent training programme, including AusAid, the New South Wales Community Council, the Irene Prestwich Trust, IofC Australia and countless individuals, through personal donations and community fund raising events.

Dorothy Tingu, host of the 2005 Creators of Peace conference in Uganda, handing on the candle as a symbol of the ongoing commitment to being creators of peace to Trish McDonald Harrison, one of the conference co-ordinators.
As dusk settled in, we gathered together around the circle. ‘What unites us are our stories,’ observed Susan Moylan-Coombs, Executive Producer of ABC Television’s Indigenous Programs Unit. And she was right – we each had a story to tell and every story was sacred.

Susan and other Indigenous women (some of whom were descendants of the Ku-ring-gai people, traditional land owners where we were meeting) lit the leaves to begin the smoking ceremony. As they shared their stories they explained that Aboriginal people have used smoke and fire as a healer and purifier for thousands of years. All around women breathed in the eucalypt-scented smoke.

Other indigenous women from Nagaland in India, and New Zealand, took the opportunity to present symbols of peace from their own cultures – a Naga shawl that was hand-woven 62 years ago and three white feathers.

In the following days, Ngarrindjeri women who had travelled from the Coorong in South Australia taught some of their traditional skills such as rush weaving and feather flower-making.

We were privileged to hear many stories from the first Australians and we were richer for their presence.

Carmel Ehrenkreutz, Australia

’I want to thank my Indigenous sisters. We always say we come from pioneering stock and we do, but now I realize that what we need to pioneer is a new, closer relationship with each other.’

Jan Todd, Australia

’It is so generous of the people whose land we stole to now welcome us so graciously.’

Rita Lindsay Jnr, Australia

’We need to heal the wounds of the past so we can move on.’
Creating a Culture of Peace is like the weaving of cloth. There are many threads and many colours, a glorious diversity of conviction and experience. The loom, or frame, on which we weave is our shared intention to create this culture.

We asked ourselves – What will it take? Any culture obviously has to embrace economic structures, systems of governance, environmental issues, human rights, art and ritual. And the consequences of its history… it’s a huge subject.

But other threads that should inform these structures and underpin a culture of peace are shared in these pages and we discover that these threads are not only out there, but deeply anchored within each one of us.

Peace is the invitation to live differently. An invitation to transformation, and a culture of peace is created when everyone is engaged in creating it.

ChiChi Seii, Kenya

‘I’ve learnt from my indigenous sisters the importance of the stories of my ancestors and how they have a way of bringing peace. I will tell these stories to my children.’

Lesley Bryant, Australia

‘I had grown up with an assumed belief in my white racial superiority even though I knew I am really a ‘coloured’ person. As a teenager, a relative had told me my great-grandmother was Samoan and my grandfather was born in Fiji. This had excited me and my brothers but my mother was furiously angry and we knew to stay silent. The first time my parents and I were able to discuss the racism behind this forced silence was when my parents were in their eighties! Even then, my mother said bitterly, “No one knows what racism had cost me,” and burst into tears. My father reassured her, “Oh, I always knew you were coloured!” One reason for my mother’s silence was she thought my father had not known her background. I am so glad we had that conversation before my father died. Silence can be so disempowering! Speak before it is too late!

‘In 2005 I met two Fijian women. They asked where I was from and I responded with naming the part of Australia that was my home. They insisted, “No, where are you from?” and for the first time I said, “Samoa!” They had seen that in me and they asked my great-grandmother’s name – I told them – “Oh, we know your family well!” With their help, my mother, daughter and granddaughter reconnected with our Samoan family in Fiji and later with our family and roots in Samoa too. That was wonderful; my mother is now proud of her Samoan heritage at age 87, the power of truth telling and personal connection.

‘My mother hid her Samoan heritage because she would have been treated as a “Kanaka” in far north Queensland. These 63,000 indentured labourers were initially stolen or “blackbirded” from Solomons, Vanuatu and other South Pacific islands to work in Queensland’s sugar industry. By 1904 those remaining were deported when the “White Australia Policy” came in with the Federation of Australia in 1901, many to Fiji.

Now I am working with the Australian Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies on my “Blackbirding Reconciliation” Project.’
Linda Burney MP, Australia

New South Wales State Minister of Community Services, first Aboriginal person to be elected to the State Parliament.

‘Looking around this audience of 240 women creating a culture of peace and asking ourselves – what does it take? It takes rooms like this, women like this, women who know how to tell stories, the most important is the telling of truth. We must raise our children to be aware of the suffering of others, the truth of our history in Australia. Peace is about truth telling.’

Portia Mosia, South Africa

Portia was the victim of a kidnap and gang rape in 2001. For several years she was lost, ‘I couldn’t find the essence of who I was, when would my pain end?’ In 2007 she went to a Creators of Peace Circle workshop where she was able to tell her story for the first time. ‘I had so much hatred, but I took my unforgiving heart and made it a forgiving heart.’ Portia has continued to work with the Creators of Peace Circles in her country, ‘they can make a simple but powerful contribution. For everyone to have their pain acknowledged and their story heard. I have so much conviction about what I want to do in my own country but I didn’t realize how much work I need to do in my own family first.’

Glenys Wood, New Zealand

Settler (Pakeha) and Maori New Zealanders came together to the conference. A small drama of truth telling and forgiveness between two women, one Maori and one Pakeha, was presented and introduced by one of the players, Glenys Wood.

‘I always thought New Zealand’s colonial past was not as bad as portrayed, but I have a new awareness through listening to the stories of Maori friends. I have had a patronizing and arrogant attitude and am truly sorry for the way we robbed them of their land.’

We learn to be peace makers by truly knowing who we are… also by knowing our gifts and using them as peace gifts to other humans.

trude aspe ling SOUTH AFRICA/AUSTRAlia
Weaving the threads for a culture of peace

Listening to Understand

Monica McIntosh, Jamaica/UK

‘One day during my time of inner listening, I faced the thought that as a senior local government officer I had had a part in not being honest with the residents of a government-owned housing estate which had got into a state of disrepair. There had been a breakdown in trust over the approach taken to the raising of the funds required.

‘I was faced with a critical choice - whether or not I was going to make amends with the residents who had been wronged and so rebuild trust with the community we were supposed to be serving. Despite my Director saying we would have a string of litigation cases if we apologized, I shared these thoughts with others that I trusted before I acted to apologize for the wrong. Subsequently we were able to start working together on a trust-based partnership.’

Lily Munir, Indonesia. Human Rights Activist

‘The Quiet Time improves the quality of my communication with the Almighty and other human beings.’

Su Riddell, UK

The Housewife’s Quiet Time

‘I’ve been practising taking a time of quiet inner listening in the morning for years. This is what happens on a typical day:

‘I wake up to the dog barking at the milk delivery. It’s too early to get up. So I go back to bed and doze a bit.

‘My husband’s alarm goes off. He is already downstairs peacefully reading. I reach across to turn off the alarm. It is still too early to get up (or to want to get up). I lie there and think about the day and let all my worries go through my mind.

‘I get up, but miss the bathroom as my son gets in first. So I go and make breakfast.

‘I empty the dishwasher, organize the son’s forgotten school items, refill the dog’s water bowl and get the son to think about brushing his hair… Now my husband is talking to me about the state of the world and by the way, he’ll be away all day tomorrow, did he tell me? Our son has forgotten the time, and swears generously. Then my husband and son monopolize the bathroom again. So I start my Quiet Time.

‘I get halfway through the inspirational readings I do every day, when I remember my son is still not out of the door. So I go and monitor the process for departure – putting on shoes and finalizing the bag takes 10 minutes, including an argument about whether he should go into town with his friends after school.

‘I return to my Quiet Time. My husband appears full of dates for the diary to check together. I listen and discuss. My husband leaves, returning twice for things forgotten, and interrupting me each time.

‘Finally I finish my readings and move on to prayer. I’m not sure if I’m praying, meditating or just staring at a blank wall. I have a few bright ideas, can’t find my notebook, so I dash off to send an email. I get sucked into answering six more emails. I work from home and the temptation is to respond immediately, not plan.

‘Suddenly I don’t feel peaceful. I return to my Quiet Time spot. I find my pen and notebook. I think about each challenge of the day, giving each enough space and time. New thoughts come. I sit in silence a while longer, until a sense of peace descends and wonder at the gift of life. Then I go and get on with the day.’

Weaving the threads for a culture of peace
Kay Lindahl, USA
Founder of The Listening Center in California and author of The Sacred Art of Listening, Practicing the Sacred Art of Listening and How does God Listen?

Listening is more than hearing words and more than an action, in Kay’s words, ‘listening is an art’. Sadly it has become a lost art. Yet the ‘yearning to be heard’ persists. It is this universal yearning that inspired Kay to develop the idea of ‘The Listening Center’, which she explained, is not a physical place but actually dwells within each one of us - the innermost part of us where in the silence we remember who we are.

Listening is a creative force that transforms relationships. Listening from our hearts, open and waiting for the other to speak what is truly in their heart, is a ministry of hospitality. Speaking from the heart takes courage - to risk and be vulnerable with another. Connecting with someone at the heart level is a sacred experience.

Listening and speaking are two components of communication. Yet, although society places greater value on speaking, listening is often more powerful. Indeed the quality of our listening can make a profound difference in any conversation. Most of us have had the experience of preparing a talk or presentation, but do we ever prepare to listen? Kay challenged us to think about what that might mean— to become a true listening presence, and shared three practices that she says are essential elements of this spiritual discipline: cultivating silence, slowing down to reflect, and becoming present.

There are few silent places any more. We spend our days only half aware of what we’re doing. Kay encouraged us to ask the question, ‘What wants to be said or done next?’ and to take what she called a ‘mindfulness minute’, a moment, a deep breath, before responding to someone. Perhaps the most important question we can ask ourselves is, how can I listen that will make a difference?

Listening is a choice. But it’s also a gift – perhaps the greatest gift we ever give each other. When two people listen deeply to each other, we sense that we are present not only to each other, but also to something beyond our individual selves, something spiritual, holy or sacred.

The story-sharing during this conference has been sacred... we’ve been able to understand the experience of another and that has been so precious.

elsa kyriacou-balopitos CYPRUS/AUSTRALIA
Courage to Forgive

Didacienne Mukahabeshimana, Rwanda

‘There was a time when I thought that healing my wounds meant executing all the perpetrators of the genocide.’ A hush fell over the room as all eyes were fixed on Didacienne Mukahabeshimana, a former nurse and trade unionist.

She then shared the experience of standing in a packed stadium waiting for some of those involved in the genocide to be brought out and executed. She had waited for this day for a long time. Finally, she thought, justice would be served. But when they brought the men out, their faces covered in black hoods, and the crowd started to erupt into a frenzy, something deep inside Didacienne told her this was not the right way and that justice would never result from taking a life for a life. That was shortly before she blacked out.

When Didacienne regained consciousness, something had changed inside her. In that moment before the execution she realized that life is a precious gift and that rather than seek revenge she wanted to try and transform the perpetrators – help them become more human. And so began her journey from fear to love.

Being a nurse, Didacienne had heard that some hospitals were keeping patients who were known to be perpetrators of the genocide, in sectioned-off wards and starving them. Along with some friends, Didacienne had the idea to start taking food to them. Although many of the men were on the verge of death, they refused the food as they were suspicious and felt sure that the food must be poisoned. However, as time went on and Didacienne’s team continued coming to the hospital, they started to realise that their actions were motivated by love. It was this love that broke through to them and as a result many started writing letters to the families of their victims to ask for forgiveness.

It was a turning point – for both the perpetrators and Didacienne.

Through this experience, Didacienne realised that transformation is possible. When you know yourself, she says, it becomes possible to forgive because you are able to see your own darkness.

In 2005, after attending the Creators of Peace conference in Uganda, Didacienne and colleague Mathilde Kayitesi started an NGO called Umuhuza, continuing the work of rehabilitation, especially with families.

Filomena dos Reis, Timor-Leste

Poet, peace activist and women’s rights advocate.

‘I grew up with my country in conflict. We would smile, but with bitterness inside. My husband disappeared in 1991 during the Indonesian military occupation. I have taught my daughters to forgive and respect. If you live with your hatred and anger, you block yourself off from others. Peace has to start with me. I have to embrace my enemy; as human beings, they are also victims. I use poetry to reach out to the people:

‘Throw away your weapons, throw away your anger, come together with your mothers and sisters… sons of Timor-Leste… so we can live in peace, live in love. Enough, enough, enough…’

After she had spoken, a moving reconciliation took place with the Indonesian women present, bringing tears and embraces. In the following days, as regional groups met, Indonesians and Timorese combined their efforts in planning to carry forward the process of peace.
**Mahboba Rawi**, Afghanistan

She was a fighter from the start. As a schoolgirl in Kabul she was so prominent in student demonstrations against the Russian occupation that she was forced to flee the country. She spent some years on the Pakistan border before coming to Australia where she worked very hard as a cleaner. She had three children, but in 1997 the extended family was having a day out at the seaside when a freak wave swept seven family members off the rocks. All were drowned, including her eldest son. About this time a friend showed her a letter from a woman doctor on the Afghanistan/Pakistan border. It was a desperate plea about children dying from starvation and sickness. Mahboba thought, ‘What good is sitting here crying going to do?’ and she began to raise money to send to the doctor, Dr. Nazrin. A while later she received a letter with 35 thumb prints on it. Mahboba says that on that day her life changed – she became the mother of 35 orphans.

In 1998 she founded a charity called Mahboba’s Promise, caring for widows and orphans. Today her charity supports 3 orphanages, a school of 6,000 children and 2 clinics. There are thousands of children under Mahboba’s care, ‘too many children call me mother’, she says. Though it is a struggle to keep raising funds she still has hope. ‘There is so much hate and anger in the world, but if you show children love they will choose the right way – the way of love and peace – themselves.’

Responding to Mahboba’s story was a young Russian woman, **Zhanna Petrokovitch**. ‘I have been looking forward to meeting an Afghan person, though I am a bit nervous. I am so grateful for the way you stretched out your hand to me. When I was young and the Russians occupied Afghanistan I was told, “The best time to kill them is when they are praying because then they don’t run.” I am so sorry and feel deeply ashamed. I don’t see a future for my country if we do not deal with such things. The past will keep repeating itself.’

**Judith Fangalasuu** and **Susan Kukiti**, Solomon Islands

Judith 2nd from right, Susan 3rd from right.

Both are church pastors, working together to rebuild their conflict-torn country after a protracted struggle between two island provinces, Malaita and Guadalcanal. They had been personally confronted by the violence when Susan’s brother was murdered and beheaded by men from Judith’s island. Susan shared, ‘We came to a point when we knew we had to forgive. From this heart of forgiveness I see Judith as my sister. Burying my brother without a head was very hard, but now the hate is gone. “Love records no wrong”.

**If we really want to forgive another, we have to put ourselves in their shoes.**

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Creating a culture of peace – what will it take?
Commitment to Transformation

**Chea Vannath, Cambodia**

*Former president of the Center for Social Development.*

Something changed for Chea Vannath after fleeing Cambodia in 1979. A former civil servant, her comfortable life had not protected her from the terrors of the Pol Pot regime when she was forced with millions of others from the cities to work in the fields. 600,000 were killed or died from starvation. She had been near to death herself and now, in the safety of a refugee camp in Thailand, ‘I felt a sense of duty to help those destitute and vulnerable people. I forced myself to change from a typical and traditional Cambodian woman to be a more active, assertive, and articulate person by participating in different activities in the refugee camp, and started to stand up for the voiceless and less fortunate people.’

Embracing a new leadership role, she went to America where she worked with the post-conflict community of Cambodians, gained her masters degree and returned to Cambodia with the UN Transitional Authority in 1992.

From 1996 she started a series of Public Forums where citizens could express their needs and concerns to the authorities. Three years later she took part in organizing a Public Forum about putting the Khmer Rouge on trial. ‘During the preparation, I realized that the trial was not an end in itself. What we needed was National Reconciliation. We invited the KR intellectuals and people who lived in the former KR zones to our Forum. It was the first ever series of Public Forums headed by an NGO that involved the KR in a peaceful process.’

Earlier, in 1995, she had formed The Center for Social Development (CSD) a non-profit, non-political organization working and advocating for the people of Cambodia. To respond to governance issues, the Center seeks to promote social equity and sustainable economic development by building citizen participation in the democratic process. In Transparency International’s Corruption Perceptions Index 2008, Cambodia ranks at 166 among 180 countries. The Center conducted the first-ever Cambodian ‘Public Attitudes Towards Corruption’ survey. A disturbing finding was that young people demonstrated a very poor awareness of the dangerous impact of corruption, limiting the education, health and social welfare of ordinary people.

With cooperation from the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, the Center embarked on an educational programme that covers a range of ethical and governance issues, which were taught to children and young adults in the public schools. A series of campaigns and seminars, also using art and literature, have followed.

‘We feel that if we don’t teach our children the values of our society and show them that corruption is not part of the Cambodian culture, we might just as well give up. Fighting corruption in a post-conflict country is an up-hill battle, but it is a moral fight. People work towards creating a better society when they can live with harmony and dignity.’

**Lei Erh Ling, Taiwan**

Majored in business administration. She is on the board of Initiatives of Change Taiwan.

‘I was sold by my birth parents when I was one month old. When my adopting parents separated and they were negotiating over which one would keep me, my father, whom I adored, said, “She’s not my real child and I don’t love her anyway,” so I stayed with my mother who was a polio victim. I grew up with a deep fear of abandonment. I could not safely love anyone and was full of hate. I took it out on society by cheating, stealing and hurting people. When I started to listen to the inner voice, I began to address all the anger that was inside me. I wrote many letters to my father, though not knowing where he was I never posted any of them. Finally I was able to write, ‘Father, no matter what you have done, I respect you as a father. I forgive and love you.’ I started to get on with people, apologized to my teacher for cheating and paid back money to the shop from which I had stolen. The shop owner said I had restored his hope. I now want to be part of the answer rather than part of the problem in society. I want to be a creator of peace.’
Creating a culture of peace – what will it take?

Barbara Perry MP, Australia

Minister for Local Government in the New South Wales State Government, pictured left.

‘In my position I can get schools built, put a lift in a railway station, organize various constructions for the health and safety of the community, but I cannot create social cohesion. My faith has taught me that we are to be the salt and light of the world. We are called to live for more than ourselves.’

Anna Kima Hoth, Sudan

Deputy Commissioner for the Demobilisation, Disarmament and Reintegration programme of the government of South Sudan. Pictured here (right) with Barbara Perry.

In the late 90’s she played a role in the wellknown Dinka-Nuer Peace Accord which is studied world wide as the Wunlit agreement.

‘To be a peacemaker is to be a thinker rather than a wonderer.’ Anna was speaking on the subject ‘thinking out of the box’, looking for unpredictable solutions in conflict situations. She told the story of the abduction of young people from some villages during the civil war in Sudan. They were held, close to starvation, by the local militia in their camp. Refusing all pleas for their release, the women resorted to a desperate measure; they marched naked, old women in front, to the camp, to shame the soldiers into compliance. Shocked, the officers on duty rushed to the commander to tell him. He refused to budge until he learned that his own wife was among the demonstrating women, at which point he immediately ordered the children to be freed!

Dr Joyce Angami, India

One of four women from Nagaland in northeast India sent to the conference by their State Government, Nagaland has known conflict for more than 50 years. At the age of 12 Joyce was injured in the crossfire. Shrapnel and hatred lodged deep inside her, to be carried for years. Now in her work as a doctor specializing in drug use prevention, she sees other conflicts invading Naga homes – the mental torture of fear, shame and guilt, drug and alcohol dependency and family members suspicious of each other. She herself had to let go of trying to control her own brother’s life and in the process found a new respect for him and an inner serenity which she now helps others to find.

‘Here we have learnt the power of truth telling and the gift of listening to the inner voice for guidance and we have received healing and courage to move forward through the shared stories of perseverance. We have received these gifts and more to start Creators of Peace Circles in Nagaland to initiate a culture of peace for our children.’

In learning how to change myself, you’ve changed my life.
edie carter AUSTRALIA

Creating a culture of peace – what will it take?
Once upon a time a grand-daughter asked her grandmother, ‘Why are some people so mean and greedy?’

‘Well,’ said the grandmother, ‘inside every person there are two wolves. One is mean and greedy while the other one is loving and generous. And these two wolves are always fighting each other.’ ‘Who wins then?’ asked the grand-daughter.

The grandmother replied, ‘The one that you feed.’

**Polly Walker, USA/Australia**

Polly is of Cherokee Anglo-European descent. A post doctoral research fellow at the Australian Centre for Conflict and Peace Studies at the University of Queensland, she spoke of the qualities of a peacemaker to include being the keeper of stories, listening to the stories of others including the enemy’s and the oppressors’, birthing new stories and giving voice to the stories of those unable to share their own.

**Babu Badiguya, Papua New Guinea**

‘I always thought that peace makers had to go to college and have a law degree, but now I’ve taken part in Creators of Peace I realize that I too am a peace maker.’

**Deborah Sullivan, Australia**

‘My experiences are not a waste – I can help people who have had similar trauma. The compassion which was shown to me, I can now show to others. Blessings have come out of my trauma and I can pass those blessings on to others.’
Lina Hamade, Lebanon

*Health Educator and co-founder of Li-Naltaqi movement.*

'We have many Lebanons in Lebanon. Lebanese differ at several levels. In fact, religious differences are only one part of the whole picture, yet it is emphasised in a manner that overlooks the remaining dissimilarities.

'I wondered whether I had the right to blame others for being unaware of my identity. I have blamed other parties for not familiarizing themselves with me, while not reciprocating the practice. I gave myself the right to differ, but deprived them of that right. Blaming others for being different is simple; the challenge remains in understanding and accepting them. The result of not doing this produces an “other” that is unknown, defaced and dreadful.

'I decided to embark on a journey of knowledge of others, and started by founding Li-Naltaqi movement (Arabic for “Let’s Get Together”) with my friend Marie Chafftari from the Christian community. The movement was established in the summer of 2005, through the initiative of Muslim and Christian women interested in reinforcing the co-existence of all religious and cultural identities.

'The initiative came as a result of our concern that our children may face a dreadful and intolerant future, and our vision that religious diversity is a source of civilisation. We live together in simplicity and compassion. We admitted the mistakes of our own parties in order to be able to overcome them.

'Our experience remains modest, and managing it becomes harder as time passes and incidents occur. In fact, it is not easy to face the wind and swim against the current. Yet, my experience with Marie and the other women, although limited, taught me a lot:

- To view things from the others’ perspectives, appreciate what they appreciate, enjoy what they celebrate, and respect what they revere.
- That God is not restricted to certain groups, but exists in the hearts of all people.
- To sense with my feelings and mind rather than my instincts.
- That God’s message is universal and superior to any attempt at manipulating it.’

Rebekah Brown, Australia

'I’m committed to being a peace builder for the sake of the next generation. If I want them to be free of bitterness, then I need to be free of bitterness. If I want them to forgive others, then I need to forgive others. What seeds am I sowing in my home?’

I’ve listened and cried with so many people over the last few days and I got present to my own pain and woundedness. My mother was a holocaust survivor but the rest of my family perished. I’ve also recognized that out of that woundedness I have alienated myself from the Jewish community. I realize that I need to put myself back into that community and start the healing.

*Judy Greenberg,* Australia
**Creators of Peace** is an international network of women committed to the pursuit of a radical peace where personal honesty and integrity form the basis of reconciliation. Creators of Peace is a programme of Initiatives of Change. Launched in 1991 at the Initiatives of Change center in Caux, Switzerland, CoP now operates globally through Creators of Peace Circles, conferences, workshops, personal encounters and community building activities.

Aims include:
- To pre-empt violence and despair by addressing the roots of conflict in and around us.
- To encourage and connect existing ‘peace builders’.
- To raise awareness of the moral and spiritual pre-requisites for effective social action.
- To build just, caring and inclusive communities for all.

**Creators of Peace Circles**

Creators of Peace Circles. Many of the women attending the 5th International Creators of Peace conference had previously participated in Creators of Peace Circles. These had been life changing experiences that had engaged them in trust building relationships and initiatives in their local communities in a new way.

Immediately following the conference, 40 women stayed on for a two day intensive CoPC introduction and facilitation training. Armed with Peace Circle facilitation manuals they returned to different parts of Australia and other countries prepared to start CoPCs in their own communities.

Creators of Peace Circles are small community gatherings of women who together work through material designed to deepen their friendship and understanding of the nature of peace and their own peace creating capabilities. One aim of these Peace Circles is to identify issues in the community with a potential for conflict and resolve to take common action.

Peace Circles are available worldwide - from Sydney to Sudan, Sweden to Solomon Islands. If you would like to participate in a Creators of Peace Circle or find out more, please contact creatorsofpeace@iofc.org

**About Initiatives of Change**

Initiatives of Change is a global movement that has worked for social transformation and reconciliation since 1938. The International Association of Initiatives of Change (IoFC) is an NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC) and has Participatory Status at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg. It is based in Geneva, Switzerland.

**Finances**

Creators of Peace programmes and activities worldwide are conducted primarily by volunteers. Funding is especially required to respond to invitations for the promotion, follow-up and support of Creators of Peace Circles and the training of facilitators throughout Africa, Asia and the Pacific Islands in particular.

For information on how to send donations write to creatorsofpeace@iofc.org
Creating a Culture of Peace

Music and lyrics by Rob Wood

VERSE 1: Will we ever find the way to end our wars?
   Find the strength to heal the wounds
   our hearts still store?
   And can we learn to build the trust
   that breaks the walls?
   Find the will to shape a world of hope for all?

CHORUS: Let’s create a culture of peace
   Where our hates and enmities cease
   We can turn our foes into friends
   So that broken hearts start to mend
   And if we make the choice to forgive
   We may learn this new way to live

VERSE 2: Must the future be the same way as the past?
   Or will our love be strong enough to last?
   Could forgiveness be a bridge across the earth?
   Show a path for all of dignity and worth?

Often in our everyday lives we don’t see each other or know one another but at this conference we’ve really looked into each other’s eyes, into each other’s hearts.

mary bagaric AUSTRALIA
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