



Envisioning a More Caring Society – ROM 10th Year Celebration

By Randall Butler

From July 13-27, I joined seventy young leaders and speakers/mentors from 16 countries who came together to celebrate the past ten years of the ROM Leadership Development & Peace Gathering and to explore how to contribute to building a more caring society when they return home. I have so many stories I could tell you but we don't have the space and I certainly do not want to clog up your email server. I want to share the stories of two of just two of our participants.

Since he came to ROM for the first time in the summer of 2005, Gerti Bogdani has been selected to be the official spokesperson for the political party in power in Albania and has been elected as mayor of his borough in Tirana, the capital city of Albania. Last year Gerti obtained donations from several companies and grocers in Tirana with which his office put together over 300 food baskets to distribute to the poorest of the poor in his borough. Unlike prior administrations, they distributed the baskets without regard to the political affiliation of the recipients. Also, unlike his predecessors, Gerti would not permit his staff to contact the local media to cover this service event. I asked him why he would not want some positive publicity. His response was "Jesus said that when you give your alms you should not let your right hand know what your left hand is doing." He went on to explain that it would not be a gift if publicized through the media. It would just be more political manipulation. I realized then that I have a lot to learn from this young leader in his late 20s.

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Randy Butler

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Another inspiring young leader is Boriana Staykova who also first came to ROM in 2005. Boriana is a lawyer in Bulgaria with the Bulgarian equivalent of OSHA in the USA. Two weeks ago we were enthralled by her story of inspecting one of the most successful and popular restaurants in the capital where she found appalling workplace conditions, including an

electrical problem in the kitchen that could have easily resulted in "cooking the cook." The owner of the restaurant is a tall physically powerful man who looked more like a mafia boss than a restaurant owner. He became very angry when she handed him the citation requiring him to make the repairs and pay some very hefty fines. He then totally ignored her, the only woman on the team, and told one of the men in her team to come to his office to speak in private. Boriana saw what was happening and followed them to the man's office. The restaurant owner told her that she was not invited and that he wanted to talk in private to the young man. Boriana stood her ground, looked this possible Mafioso in the eye and let him know that she was the leader of the inspection team, no discussions of bribes would be tolerated and that he better make the repairs and pay the fines. The restaurant owner made the repairs & paid the fines. The employees of the restaurant have a safer place to work. There was less corruption in Bulgaria that day. Put this one down in the win column for a less corrupt and more civil society in Bulgaria.

I had the chance to ask several of the young leaders at the workshop, "What do you need back home?" "How can we better serve you?" They all said the same things: 1) keep doing the project leadership development gathering so other young leaders from my country can come learn to be servant leaders committed to building a more civil society; 2) Randy, please come visit us in our home cities. We need the encouragement and we will set up opportunities for you to speak to our friends. And 3) we need workshops in our home countries where we learn specific leadership skills and receive substantive training in conflict management, team building, project management and similar subjects. As we plan future work in the region, this is where I want to focus.

New Civil Discourse and Conflict Resolution Radio Program

On September 13, 2008, Randall Butler will kick off a new radio program focused on promoting a more civil discourse and constructive conflict management. The program will be part of Ada Edwards's regular Saturday morning radio show that she has had for almost 20 years. The program will air on KROI 92.1 FM once a month on the second Saturday of each month. We are still working on the start time. We will keep you posted so you can listen in.

Funding Our Work in Southeast Europe

The work of The Institute for Sustainable Peace in Southeast Europe (the former Yugoslavia) is all done in partnership with the ROM Project. Our role is to help provide financial resources and to directly participate in the projects by equipping participants with substantive knowledge and skills in conflict management, servant leadership, generative dialogue, and peace building.

ROM was started by an indigenous NGO, Life Center International (LCI). LCI has started several initiatives in the region over the past ten years and always with the intent that the initiatives will grow to become independent NGOs with their own governing boards, staff, and supporting constituents. This year ROM will take that big step to independence and to the expansion of its leadership development and peace projects in the region. As ROM moves into its next decade of equipping young leaders, The Institute will be right alongside.

If you have been a past supporter of ROM, thank you for making this important work possible. If you have not contributed to this important transformative work, why not start now? You can send your gifts to ROM by making your check payable to The Institute for Sustainable Peace. Simply write in ROM on the memo line. We will deposit your check and wire the funds to ROM. Your check will help support the Economic Diplomacy Seminar that begins next week, salaries for staff in the fall, and reunions and workshops in the leading cities of the region.

Leaders for a New Sudan

On August 14, 2008, thirty two leaders and potential leaders came to the YMCA of the Rockies in Estes Park, Colorado for our Second Annual Leadership Development Workshop in the USA. Among the participants are 23 leaders from the north and south of Sudan and from Darfur.

The theme this year is leading to a sustainable future. Throughout our seven days together we will be asking the question: What are the qualities and skills that a leader of the future will need in order to help build sustainable peace? Our speakers represent the business, government and non-profit sectors of society. They include: John Montgomery,

founder of Bridgeway Capital Management; Ada Edwards, civil rights activist, three term City Council Member for Houston, and the current Deputy Chief of Staff for Neighborhoods in Mayor Bill White's Office; and former U.S. Senator and Ambassador to Burundi, Robert Krueger, Ph.D. We will also be hearing from John Musuku, via Skype. John is a courageous radio journalist in Zimbabwe and Executive Director of Voice of the People Radio, which promotes civil society and freedom of the media in Zimbabwe. We will bring you a report on this exciting workshop in our next edition of Peace Notes.

Partner With Us in Peace Building

You are invited to join us in the great work of peace building. To invest in equipping and connecting leaders of the future committed to collaborative peace-building initiatives, send your check to The Institute for Sustainable Peace, 3217 Montrose Blvd., Houston, Texas 77006, or, make a donation online at www.2peace.org/Give and follow the instructions on the screen.



2008 Leadership Development Workshop participants with speaker Senator Bob Krueger in Estes Park, Colorado
Picture courtesy of Mary Katherine Butler