



THE INSTITUTE FOR SUSTAINABLE PEACE

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TRANSFORMING THE WORLD ONE YOUNG LEADER AT A TIME

In the last edition of Peace Notes, we mentioned that we were following up with participants who attended this year's Leadership Development Workshop in Estes Park, Colorado entitled "Leading to a Sustainable Future." We have received some very inspiring feedback, and would love to share all of the stories with you, because your support made them possible. In this issue, we have decided to share just one story, written by a Sudanese participant.

I was in a period in my life where I felt I needed to expand my involvement in the community and give more of my time and energy. When the opportunity presented itself for me to attend this conference, I was very elated and thought to myself "great!" This is exactly what I had been waiting for, a conference that will help me build my leadership skills. I was expecting a conference where we would be taught the values and qualities of making a good leader. I was marveled with the outcome because it was nothing that I expected and everything I hoped for.

"For the first time in my life I visualized the idea of a united peaceful Sudan."

The first day was more or less what I expected. That evening, Randy's opening remarks were with a clip from the movie the *Matrix*, where he offered us "the red or the blue pill." I was neither familiar with the movie nor the analogy he was trying to portray but it all came together in the end. As we proceeded with the conference and listened to speakers who came from different walks of life, and as we became a community and opened dialogue amongst ourselves, my senses begun to open and I started looking at the world from a different perspective.

"I had definitely taken the red pill by the end."

The cumulative experience of the conference including the speakers, group discussions, films and finally the live demonstration of natural horsemanship was most significant to me. My most memorable moments were the talks that we had from John Montgomery on trust and forgiveness. These two topics hit close to home, I was able to come and approach personal grievances with close friends and family. Before

the talks on forgiveness, peace and the group discussions, I had never considered the possibility of forgiveness when it came to the political issues of Sudan. I held a strong grudge towards the Northerners. Having different representatives from Sudan and sitting together in group discussions helped me to stop demonizing the Northerners. I was brought up to believe that they were the devil. For the first time in my life I visualized the idea of a united peaceful Sudan.

Randy's talk on generative dialogue was also very helpful when it came to dealing with daily life issues and it came very handy at school. I work at a laboratory in school and we collaborate with a lab in Africa. There is usually a lot of blame and pointing of fingers going around when things go wrong. A lot of times we tend to blame the other end for not working hard or producing results. I noticed that we here in America tend to hold them up to our standards and expectations. We forget that they are in a different continent with a different environment, culture and work ethic. After the conference, a situation came up that made it a good opportunity for me to bring up this issue with some of my colleagues. We ended up having a serious, heated discussion about it and came up with ways of changing our approach.

My experience at the conference turned out to be an introspective journey. I had definitely taken the red pill by the end. Which ironically, I believe is the foundation in the making of a leader. Like Gandhi said, "Be the change you want to see in the world." And that change has to start within and that's what happened to me.

CAFÉ DIALOGUE AMONG DIVERSE CITIZENS IN HOUSTON

The Institute for Sustainable Peace held its first Café Dialogue on October 23 at the Breakfast Klub. Approximately 25 people, of different races, religions and generations, participated in a series of conversations on the subject of “Building Community in the Most Diverse City in the USA - Houston.”

The second Café Dialogue was held on November 20. Approximately 30 people attended to discuss “Building Community: From the Rat Race to the Human Race.”

Café Dialogue consists of multiple rounds of conversations in response to provocative, open ended, positive questions. At the end of each round participants move to tables with participants with whom they have not been sitting. By the end of the evening, depending on the total number of participants, everyone will have had an

opportunity to engage in a real conversation with nearly everyone else about subjects that matter.

In a Café Dialogue, there are no right or wrong answers. Participants are challenged to question their own values and assumptions, and to listen to others in a way that acknowledges the validity of the others’ experiences and opinions. The aim of each of our Café Dialogues is not to find solutions, but rather to begin to ask the right questions so that a productive and creative dialogue can emerge.

Please join us on December 18, from 6:00pm to 8:30pm at The Breakfast Klub, 3711 Travis, to continue the dialogue. The theme for that evening will be “Peace on Earth.”

CONFLICT RESOLUTION RADIO PROGRAM

Randy Butler is continuing his monthly appearances on Ada Edwards’ Saturday morning radio show on KROI 92.1FM to talk about Peace Building. Tune in at 8:30am on the second Saturday of each month!

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A special thanks goes to our donors who make this work possible. To invest in equipping and connecting leaders of the future committed to collaborative peace-building initiatives, you can send your check to The Institute for Sustainable Peace, 3217 Montrose Blvd., Houston, Texas 77006, or, you can make a donation online at www.2peace.org/Give and follow the instructions on the screen. Together we can change the world!