



Justice Connections

A joint publication of NAFCM, PRASI and VOMA

Community Mediation AmeriCorps Program: Meeting Conflict Resolution Needs in Communities

by Joanne Galindo

The National Association for Community Mediation (NAFCM), in partnership with the Corporation for National and Community Service, has developed the Community Mediation AmeriCorps Program. The mission of the Community Mediation AmeriCorps Program is to build safe and peaceful communities by developing and promoting conflict resolution and mediation programs with youth, diverse volunteers, and the community.

AmeriCorps members are serving in 14 community mediation centers in Indiana, Louisiana, Michigan, Minnesota, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Utah, and Virginia, building the capacity of community mediation centers to enhance the public safety of communities and youth through volunteer-based conflict resolution processes and education.

The 22 AmeriCorps members that have made the commitment to serve their communities and local mediation centers are: RaeJean Clinton and Anna Lisa Gross at the Conflict Resolution Center in Richmond, Indiana; Eric Carter, Stephen Larson, Jennifer Rodrigue, and Kenneth Tompkins at Community Mediation Services in New Orleans, Louisiana; Heidi Charon and Cynthia Pouliot at UPCAP Resolution Services Program in Escanaba, Michigan; Anna Bartels and Michelle Lewis at Community Mediation Services in New Hope, Minnesota; Joanne Lee at the Dispute Settlement Center in Carrboro, North Carolina; Juan Ramirez at the Conflict Resolution Center in Hickory, North Carolina; Patsy McMillan at the Mediation Center of the Southern Piedmont in Gastonia, North Carolina; Rhonya Lackey and Theresa Young-Oyebade at the Piedmont Mediation Center in Statesville, North Carolina; Cynthia Randall at the Conflict Resolution Center in Westlake, Ohio; Karsten Peterson at Mediation Works in Medford, Oregon; Sarah Stark and Canada Taylor at Resolutions Northwest in Portland, Oregon; Sara Johnson at Utah Dispute Resolution in Salt Lake City, Utah; Tina Minor at Rappahannock Mediation Center in Fredericksburg, Virginia; and Michele Battle at

the Community Mediation Center in Norfolk, Virginia. Each AmeriCorps member brings special talents to their service assignment. Their service has resulted in too many benefits and success stories to describe.

Access to justice, teaching youth to deal with conflict, and building community connections are vital needs that the Community Mediation AmeriCorps Program addresses through three main initiatives: youth program development in the schools and with other youth serving organizations; volunteer mobilization and coordination; and community awareness and education that expands access to conflict resolution and mediation services.

Many community mediation centers specialize in developing and promoting youth conflict resolution programs that are both preventive and interventive and are vital to the health and well-being of our communities. NAFCM's AmeriCorps program implements youth program development through: conflict resolution education, peer mediation, restorative justice, and advocacy for these programs. For example, in Portland, the Canada and Sarah are helping to develop a restorative justice program in the schools. In Indiana, Anna Lisa and RaeJean conduct a Positive Alternatives conflict resolution class for suspended and expelled students.

One of NAFCM's fundamental characteristics of community mediation centers (CMCs) is the use of trained community volunteers as providers of mediation

services. Community mediation centers rely on community volunteers to provide mediation, conflict resolution, facilitation, training, and outreach. The CMC AmeriCorps sites each have from 10 to 100 volunteers. AmeriCorps members help coordinate volunteers in various programs: in schools teaching peace skills; for victim offender mediation services in juvenile justice cases; and in general mediation and family mediation services. For example, in Gastonia, NC, Patsy has recruited new volunteer community mediators. In Fredericksburg, VA, Tina arranged the basic mediation training for the volunteers she recruited.

In order to meet community needs, CMCs must publicize the services they provide and educate the community about the benefits of community mediation and conflict resolution processes. Community outreach and education are crucial, especially for under-resourced populations, as community mediation centers provide mediation services regardless of an individual's ability to pay. In Escanaba, MI, Cyndy and Heidi conduct intensive outreach to law enforcement, schools, and other agencies. In Hickory and Morganton, NC, Juan has been instrumental in bridging the gap with the Latino community.

In partnership with community mediation centers, schools and the community, AmeriCorps members teach the skills of conflict resolution to communities across

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Organizational Update

NAFCM, PRASI and VOMA inaugurate joint publication and start collaborative operations

Welcome to the first issue of **Justice Connections**, a co-produced newsletter from NAFCM, PRASI, and VOMA. For the past year we three organizations have been in focused conversations about ways to work together more collaboratively, through joint demonstration projects, creating a common website, functional integration and other cost savings. The newsletter is one of our first concrete steps toward effective collaboration.

Justice Connections will be supported by a new "publications working group" comprised of representatives of each of the three groups. This group will help identify topics and authors, ways to develop the websites, explore the possibilities of a journal and other communication tools we might use to advance all three missions.

All three groups have also identified new help in the area of development. NAFCM hired Sarah Calderon early in 2006, this Spring VOMA contracted with Steve Cramer, a professional development consultant, and Kirby Edmonds will be taking a lead from the PRASI network. We have already shared the costs of a fund raising database, and have begun development calls with representatives of the three organizations to coordinate funding efforts.

We continue to hold twice-monthly calls with representatives of each group to build relationships and to keep collaborative efforts moving forward. VOMA co-sponsored with the American Association of Community Corrections Professionals a conference in June 2006 in Miami Florida. Over 400 people attended. We also were able to work with our partners by having a pre-conference training on restorative justice and anti-racism where a team of VOMA and PRASI trainers collaborated on the two-day training and have agreed to develop a curriculum of the training for broader distribution throughout our memberships and in the offender treatment and victim services communities.

NAFCM representatives also presented at the conference on the issue of re-entry and how NAFCM is helping to build relationships with the federal government paving the way for a comprehensive re-entry program that will use community-based VORP and Mediation centers to meet the needs of offenders, victims, and communities. We've also explored several ideas for a journal and a new certificate program with a nationally known university.

A PRASI anthology, which is publishing the voices of conflict resolution/restorative justice practitioners of color, is close to publication. We'll have more about it in a future edition of this newsletter. A summary of our seven-agency pre-conference last fall, entitled "Call to Action," regarding social justice and conflict resolution is nearing completion.

Justice Connections

Justice Connections is a joint publication of the National Association For Community Mediation, the Practitioners Research And Scholarship Institute, and the Victim Offender Mediation Association.

We welcome contributions, including short articles, literature reviews, case studies, program news, images and other interesting information.

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Publishing Schedule

<i>Issue</i>	<i>Submissions Deadline</i>
#2 November, 2006	Oct 15
#3 February, 2007	Jan 15
#4 May, 2007	Apr 15

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Organizing for Change

Milwaukee's Benedict Center Organizes Neighborhood-based Community Justice

by Kit McNally

Down in the grass, close to the roots, the emotional sound bytes die out and common sense justice flourishes. In Milwaukee, we call this Community Justice, not just because it happens in the community, but also because it involves the community.

The Benedict Center, a hub of criminal justice reform initiatives located in downtown Milwaukee, has always believed the best solutions are closest to the problems. Built on a rock-hard foundation of restorative justice in 1974, our small interfaith criminal justice agency has stayed close to its own roots throughout its activist history. Community Justice, encompassing broad principles of restorative justice, was ushered in by the Benedict Center hand in hand with people from all parts of Milwaukee in the mid 90's.

Today, a model Community Justice Center is the flagship for a statewide campaign to create an innovative Community Justice and Neighborhood Reinvestment Act in Wisconsin.

Community Justice

The shift to community justice started with the Center's longstanding Citizens' Advisory Council to the Milwaukee County Criminal Justice System. This diverse group stands watch over conditions in the County Jail and other local detention facilities in the public trust, but its overriding goal is to expand alternatives to incarceration at every level.

After studying surveys of emerging day reporting centers (DRCs) around the country, the committee drew a blueprint for a pilot DRC in Milwaukee -- for a Community Justice Day Reporting Center. The planners envisioned restorative justice as a process to divert defendants from incarceration to the DRC, as well as a process to accompany the delivery of community service while participating in the DRC.

Citizens took their plan to the community, getting on the agenda of block watch groups, neighborhood organizations, senior centers -- anywhere residents were concerned about safety and quality of life. They explained the DRC alternative to jail

would enable community providers to offer treatment, education and other programs all day in a secure, structured environment where offenders would also do community service to benefit children and families living in victimized neighborhoods.

In this way neighborhood providers would bring positive culture and values to offenders who would return home every evening to strengthen their responsibility to family and community. They would make positive connections within the community and would demonstrate accountability for the harm done by their actions with positive outcomes for all involved.

The response was overwhelmingly positive. Ideas for enriching the concept were diverse and exciting. And when asked, "Would you accept a pilot day reporting center in your neighborhood?" almost every neighborhood say yes emphatically.

Victory took 18 months of continuous advocacy within the community and within the system. The legion of citizen advocates grew month by month. They urged groups they were members of to sign petitions and to call and visit reluctant justice officials and County supervisors.

Overcoming Traditional Barriers

Milwaukee judges said, "Everyone in jail needs to be there." The County Board said, "Corrections is the state's job." But the people prevailed. From the elite and powerful Greater Milwaukee Committee to the homeless in line for dinner at St. Benedict the Moor, they came to testify. They came from every County Supervisory District, they called, they wrote, and they circulated petitions.

And in the final vote, the DRC won minimal funding for a six-month pilot with all but one vote. The people again came forward to work within the meager \$150,000 allocated. The Benedict Center invited 45 agencies in to talk about subsidizing services at the DRC for six months to demonstrate its success. Every agency volunteered. At the end of the discussion a consortium of nine agencies most financially able to provide extended services

did so in space donated by one organization.

That was November 1998. Today the DRC remains a partnership of community providers, the House of Correction and the Sheriff. The 125 participants usually come by way of the courts with a sentence to the House of Correction with the option of release to Day Reporting. Restorative Community Service is part of the curriculum. Serious noncompliance will result in a return to incarceration. But there's incentive to succeed. And they do. One year after completion, about 87% remain free of involvement with the criminal justice system.

Now the judges and county officials know what the people knew from the start -- community justice is inclusive, restorative, and transformative. It works.

Expanded Efforts

The Benedict Center carried the philosophy of community justice to the Mayor's Crime Commission in 2003 as a proposal for a network of Community Justice Centers throughout the City. The Centers, staffed by trained volunteers, community prosecutors, neighborhood probation and parole agents, neighborhood police and even a neighborhood defender would be a hub for diversion and re-integration of residents who lived within the boundaries served by each center. Diverse restorative justice processes would take place at the centers to ensure accountability and support, for the victim and victimized communities . . . and for the offender.

Two major working conferences yielded an Action Plan and a strong 45 member Community Justice Action Coalition (CJAC). Thus armed, the Benedict Center took the concept for a model Community Justice Center back to the neighborhoods.

South Side Community Justice Center

Community organizations, churches, law enforcement and elected officials were invited to learn about community justice, which led to what is now a rapidly evolving

Milwaukee's Benedict Center
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ing model Community Justice Center on Milwaukee's near south side.

Located in a former convent, the South Side Community Justice Center serves one of the City's oldest and most diverse neighborhoods. English is not the first language for many and it's quite possible to hear Spanish, Lau, Polish and Serbian by walking far enough down a single main street. The cultures are rich, the residents are working class poor, and industry is a vanishing commodity in the area.

Citizens participated in planning teams and trained to participate in Justice Circles and Community Conferencing. Other residents now are training to staff the center as Community Resource Captains.

The police and Community Prosecutors were in on the planning from the start and now have space at the Community Justice Center. Slowly Community Corrections is returning to the neighborhood model of supervision where the objective is to keep the client out of the system by helping solve personal and community problems.

Municipal judges come to the Center to review Operating After Suspension cases to help individuals resolve problems and get their drivers licenses reinstated before they are faced with criminal revocation charges. In time, informal community court at the center will dispose of other low level charges that affect thousands of men, women and youth.

Milwaukee's District Attorney has made little use of diversion or deferred prosecution over the last four decades, but Community Prosecutors have embraced the concept. The Public Defender is assisting with rapid responders and may soon have an office at the Community Justice Center for a Neighborhood Defender.

The DA's Restorative Justice unit is now staging community conferencing at the Community Justice Center. Wisconsin Community Services will bring mediation and other restorative processes soon. And the Benedict Center supports Justice Circles for women involved in prostitution and drugs as part of a deferred prosecution agreement with the criminal courts and as a means to lift warrants and dispose of violations in Municipal Court.

Other Programs

Early on, community planners agreed the Community Justice Center would offer no programs to compete with existing services in the community. Instead, through community justice professionals and trained volunteers, the Center facilitates connections with appropriate local programs and services. The Benedict Center's Sentencing Advocacy Program trains residents and volunteers to use Sentencing Advocacy in Milwaukee (SAM), a web-based clearinghouse of community programs that can be worked into a structured alternative plan.

Justice 2000, a nonprofit assessment, referral and monitoring agency for individuals with mental health and drug problems is preparing to handle on-site assessments to help place and case manage individuals diverted from charging or deferred from prosecution to restorative justice processes at the Community Justice Center.

Governing Activities

The Governing Board of the Community Justice Center is 51% people who live and work within the Center's service area. Aiming for a true partnership, the remainder of the board consists of elected officials from the area and criminal justice representatives working in problem solving justice in the community.

This board will increasingly make decisions that affect neighborhood safety and quality of life in the community with a goal of neighborhood revitalization and prosperity. Asset/deficit mapping is the tool that will make this process highly informative and valuable for residents. The police and Community Corrections are both providing crime and offender mapping. Additional mapping from the city will locate absentee landlords, vacant buildings and lots, contaminated land and other deficits.

Much of the asset mapping has yet to occur through teams of area youth and University student partners. They will go block-by-block to chart churches and programs they offer, recreation centers, businesses, schools, parks and other benefits to the neighborhood.

Police/community relations are tense in Milwaukee because of incidents of police shootings and beatings on the near north and south side of the city. To help ease some tension and foster constructive dialogue the Community Justice Center is sponsoring a police/youth basketball

tournament with mixed youth and police teams. Afterwards a peacemaking circle will encourage respectful, non-confrontational discussion of issues and perceptions.

Innovation grows as more schools, businesses and churches become involved in the activities of the Community Justice Center, including coming together in a restorative circle when residents return home from prison. The family, neighbors, pastor, nearby business and if appropriate, victim, are invited to sit down with the returnee and his or her probation agent to discuss the re-entry plan, offer suggestions, concerns and support. In the process everyone in on the plan holds the offender accountable.

Funding, just like decisions and services, must be collaborative. A small Community Development block grant and rent from justice partners covers only the Justice Center manager, a few supplies and rent, and utilities. The Board is seeking corporate and private foundation support. For the time being the Benedict Center is the fiscal agent and supplies staff to help with goal fulfillment and development.

A Grand Opening

The model Community Justice Center, celebrating a Great Opening in August 2006, is the second step in a Benedict Center initiative to make community justice the norm and criminal justice the alternative in Milwaukee. The plan includes other distressed Milwaukee neighborhoods creating a network of Community Justice Centers.

But the Campaign for Community Justice doesn't end in Milwaukee. Advocates throughout the state want more. They are coming together in the Campaign for Community Justice to advocate for modifications in Wisconsin's stifling Truth in Sentencing legislation, and to seek a Community Justice and Neighborhood Reinvestment Act that will draw from the best of Community Corrections Acts, especially in areas of innovative revenue sharing, but take them a step further into Community Justice, the progressive, restorative justice of the people.

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Defining Restitution

Restitution: It's Not Just About Money

by Sheri Gatts

At first blush, restitution to victims may appear to be just about the money. As I have learned more about the principles and practices of restorative justice, however, I have come to understand that restitution means different things to different people. It is not just about the money.

When I started working in the field of restorative justice about nine years ago, I was hired to coordinate a victim-offender conferencing program for an agency that had been working very successfully for about 20 years with court involved youth. The staff was very invested in the juveniles doing well and in helping them get their lives back on track. They gave little thought to the victims. Any contact they might have had with a victim about restitution was viewed as a bother. The kid was doing so well with their court ordered requirements, why couldn't the victim just have a little more patience?

About the time I was hired, "victim rights" legislation broadened the scope of victim involvement in the criminal justice system. For the first time, victims were also considered a primary client or customer of our agency. It was time to begin redefining restitution and look at it in the context of restorative justice.

In our agency, for example, the word restitution on a court order means money that the youth needs to pay to the victim for a financial loss. Our computer database only gives two options: restitution (money) or community service (hours). Court orders are generally written with one or the other, and sometimes both. In either case, the word restitution always means money.

However, I conducted a quick Google search on the Internet and came up

with several words and phrases in the definition for restitution: amends, indemnification, redress, compensation, atonement, expiation, satisfaction, repair, mend, acquire, restore, regain, fix, return, and relief.

In addition, several phrases appeared:

- The act of putting something in working order again;
- The act of restoring to the rightful owner;
- Recognition that a legal injury was sustained; and
- Redress ordered by a court.

As you can see, the word money didn't pop up at all. In fact, it is only implied in the word compensation. Restitution can, indeed, mean many different things.

Illustration

Here's an illustration that might shed more light on this concept. Let's say a woman, whom we shall call Sally, was walking from her car in a grocery store parking lot toward the front doors of the store. It was a sunny, unseasonably warm afternoon, and there were several people coming and going in the parking lot. Four teen-aged boys ran up behind Sally; one of them shoved her from behind, knocking her to the ground. Another one of them grabbed her purse off of her shoulder while she was struggling to get back on her feet. The boys all ran toward a bus transfer point about half a block away.

A bus driver named Alice, who was standing in front of the grocery store eating a snack and waiting for her shift to begin, saw the whole thing happen. Alice ran to help Sally, while keeping her eyes on the four teen-aged boys as they ran toward the bus

transfer point. After checking on Sally, she called 911 on her cell phone.

Alice watched as the boys removed items from Sally's purse. After they had taken what they wanted, they dropped her purse into a trashcan at the bus stop. They were laughing and swaggering, and apparently waiting for their bus. When the police arrived, Alice pointed out the boys to the police. The four boys were quickly taken into custody and identified by Sally, Alice and two other witnesses in the parking lot. Sally's cell phone and \$65 in cash were recovered from the pockets of three of the boys. Her purse and the other items inside were retrieved from the trashcan.

Sally wrote a victim impact statement to the juvenile court about the robbery. In her statement, she said, "I have a heightened sense of fear whenever I see two or more teenagers walking near me. I feel the need to clutch my personal things tightly and look in all directions when they pass me. I feel my ability to go about my daily life in a safe, law abiding way has been compromised by the four boys who robbed me."

Since none of Sally's personal belongings were missing, and she had no financial loss, what sort of restitution (or redress – or atonement – or satisfaction) might Sally find helpful?

First of all, she wanted recognition that a crime had occurred. She wanted the boys to know that a real person had been harmed, and she wanted her day in court. Sally attended the hearings for each of the four youth and told the court how fearful she had been since the robbery. She asked that each of the boys provide 40 hours of community serv-

*Surrogate Circles***Surrogate Circles for Domestic Violence Survivors, Offenders and Leaders**
by Janine Geske, Anne Varichak and Kyle Leighton

In the criminal justice world, using restorative practices within the context of domestic violence has been a contentious proposition. While the potential for healing families may exist in the right situation, issues like power, control, and the risk of re-occurring violence by the abusers pose major problems for the implementation of restorative alternatives. With the serious potential impact of these factors, most restorative justice practitioners have concluded that designing and offering a restorative option for battered women is problematic. However, because of a special partnership between a victim-support organization and a batterers' treatment program, the Milwaukee community is making headway into this area.

At the request of the Milwaukee County Task Force on Family Violence (a victim services non-profit focusing on domestic violence and children's issues) and the Alma Center (a batterers' treatment facility), Marquette University Law School's Restorative Justice Initiative (MULS RJI) has been working with the advocates and treaters to develop an innovative restorative justice program to be added to their programs' existing curriculum. Mindful of the serious and justifiable concerns around using restorative justice with domestic violence offenders—such as safety and power imbalances—domestic abuse survivors were consulted before designing a circle process to use with the batterers who are in a treatment program. All participants involved thought it would be best to use surrogate survivors because the survivors could speak about the impact of domestic violence, but they did not know the offenders in the circle. These surrogate survivors are an integral part of the process.

The first three circles were held on three separate days in January 2006. The participants included about ten members of the Alma Center's batterer's intervention program, staff from the Alma Center and Task Force, four survivor speakers, Restorative Justice Initiative students, and Professor Geske. The first circle included an overview of restorative justice and the group discussed the impact of domestic violence. The men also attempted to recognize how victims of domestic violence might feel.

In the second circle, four survivors told their stories in intimate detail and discussed the impact that domestic violence had on them and their families. The speakers were women (one mother-daughter team) who all are well along in their own personal journeys of healing. The survivors had emotional and powerful stories. As each woman shared her experience with both emotional and physical abuse, the room would become incredibly silent. After they finished and as the talking piece went around the circle, the other participants shared their initial reactions. One of the survivors noted that she believed that everyone was there to help each other heal.

"It was a moving experience to see the victims' voice restored," said Michele Wink, Director of Ending Violence Through Education at the Task Force. "The crime of domestic violence is one that leaves victims powerless," she said, "The restorative justice process helps to restore that power and their voice."

On the third day, the talking piece again was passed around as members of the circle shared their reactions to the speakers' stories. Many of the men confessed that they thought a great deal about the women's experiences and described how hearing about these women's lives was an eye-opening and life-changing event for them. One of the men revealed that although he had been through other programs, he had never really understood the impact of his actions as an abuser until he heard the women speak directly.

"The major thing is that it was an empathy-building exercise. We saw a vast change in the men in relation to that," said Terri Strodhoft, the Executive Director of the Alma Center. "The night before the victims' stories we asked the men about the crime they committed and who was affected. At that time, all their responses were about themselves. After the panel they were actually trying to put themselves in the victims' shoes. They were expressing the other point of view besides their own."

Strodhoft went on to say that the restorative justice component helped their program in a few different ways. "These are not a group of people that could sit

still and listen to anyone speak for a long length of time," she said, "but that certainly happened during the panel. There was a palpable response. The reaction of the men was about respect. A few said 'I never understood what it was like to live with someone like me.'"

Some of the speakers returned for the third circle. When the men expressed their gratitude to the women, the survivors responded by describing how the circles were a great opportunity for them as well. A number of the speakers said they had never shared their stories with men before and felt it was very empowering to do so. One of the speakers also said that she never really felt like anyone had so intently listened to her uninterrupted story before, and telling it to the group of men was healing. She described that sense of healing by indicating that she before entering into the circle she "had felt like she was carrying around a backpack full of boulders," and now it "felt more like stones."

After completion of the third circle, the Alma Center instructors noted that all of the men seemed to have learned a great deal. The men expressed an interest in continuing the circles. The participants explained the process to other men that had not yet attended and encouraged others to participate. The Alma Center is currently exploring ways to allow all of the men to participate in the circles.

In addition to the direct services that the Restorative Justice Initiative helps to provide, such as programs like these, the experience gained by the law students in developing these programs is invaluable. One of the main objectives for the Initiative is to truly train community leaders, not just with classroom work and theoretical perspectives, but with real world skills.

"Although many law schools assert that they are developing future leaders, very few offer actual leadership training," Janine Geske (2005) wrote in a recent edition of the Marquette Law Review, which featured Restorative Justice as part of the Annual Symposium on Alternative Dispute Resolution. "The breadth and the infancy of the restorative justice

Local Spotlight

AmeriCorps Members Use Mediation Skills to Help Heal New Orleans

by Sabrina Dove

Orissa Arend wears many hats. As director of Community Mediation Services in New Orleans, she manages the center, and serves as a mentor and an overall community referral resource for four AmeriCorps members who are currently working for her. Being a wealth of knowledge of the local community organizing scene, Arend has helped to establish new connections between the AmeriCorps members and local relief-oriented collectives and non-profits, neighborhood associations, as well as with community mediators and facilitators.

The current crop of AmeriCorps members arrived in New Orleans with only an informal knowledge of the field of conflict resolution. However, all were eager to learn mediation skills and put them to a practical use. Arend soon convened a mediation training for these four volunteers at Community Mediation Services.

AmeriCorps members Steve Larson and Soleil Rodrigue have both found creative ways of incorporating their mediation skills into their projects and have even formed a “mediation skills niche” within some of the communities they serve.

Steve Larson traveled to New Orleans all the way from Shoreview, Minnesota, just three weeks after Katrina’s initial deluge. He has been most interested in combining newly acquired mediation and facilitation skills to work with non-profits and neighborhood associations. Arend connected Steve with the Algiers neighborhood association group. Algiers, a mixed race district located on the west bank of the Mississippi River, was one of the only neighborhoods in New Orleans that did not flood. Steve convenes and co-facilitates many of the community’s neighborhood association meetings.

The facilitation process has been a series of rewarding challenges for Steve and his co-facilitator. It’s especially difficult to gather a large diverse group

and engage in quality conversations without alienating certain groups. Steve led the group as the deep-seated issue of institutionalized racism finally came to light. Group members had initially skirted around the thorny issue, referring to it in a more passive manner as “race relations.”

The mediation skills that Steve learned proved to be very useful during many of the meetings. He often “reframed” more provocative comments and allowed individuals to transcend once fixed positions. For example, when one “solution” raised was to “get more police into the neighborhood,” Steve reframed this issue by asking if a need for establishing a greater level of trust in the community may lie beneath the demand for more police security.

The challenge, according to Steve, is to look beneath a group’s “demands” to highlight the true underlying “issues” or needs. Steve also used active listening skills to paraphrase community members’ ideas. Such a technique ensured that everyone felt both heard and understood.

Overall, Steve thinks that Katrina has enabled neighborhood associates to truly explore “what they really value” and “what it means to have a true community”. He feels very honored to be doing this work and thinks that although many New Orleanians are grieving and in a state of trauma, there is a real value that they hold towards neighborhoods and building strong communities.

Soleil Rodrigue had only a vague understanding of mediation before she arrived in New Orleans from the Northeast. But she quickly grasped how related skills could be used in many settings. She currently works as a Legal Coordinator for Common Ground Legal, a collective located in New Orleans’ lower ninth ward. One of Soleil’s main objectives is to impart self-advocacy and negotiation skills to her clients. Many clients soon learn how to advo-

cate for themselves and to negotiate with any system, be it insurance companies, federal agencies or even with their landlord.

Soleil also is working with “Safe Streets”, an organization that is building stronger and better relations between the New Orleans Police Department and the community. She seems to be especially inspired by the goals of this group and hopes that it will eventually provide a platform to transform how community members perceive conflict while enabling them to resolve more of their own disputes (without solely relying upon the police.)

Arend, Larson and Rodrigue all agree that the opportunities for incorporating mediation skills into the New Orleans relief effort and communities are manifold. Soleil noted that the New Orleans relief effort has exposed huge disparities among certain populations. These disparities have highlighted a need for community members to learn more effective negotiation, self-advocacy, and better communication skills to enable them to create more positive outcomes for themselves as they work within different systems.

Another way mediation skills could be used and taught is within relief organizations, an environment where nerves are often frayed and tempers can flare on a whim. Volunteers at many relief organizations hail from every state and vary greatly in terms of their background and expectations. College students, young twenty-somethings, doctors, anarchists, and middle-aged blue-collar workers all work, live, and eat together in very close quarters within some relief organization settings.

Given these circumstances, interpersonal conflict is an almost inevitable outcome. However, teaching relief workers mediation and effective communication skills could make the dif-

Personal Account

An AmeriCorps Member's Experience...so far

by Cynthia Randall

My experience as an AmeriCorps volunteer community mediator has been a very enlightening experience. Although I have only served eight months, I already realize that it is essential for community mediation and other forms of conflict resolution to thrive. There are still a number of communities, populations, and social arenas that can benefit from our services. Nevertheless, the true challenges appear to be the development of a conscious awareness of our skills and accessibility in the communities we serve, as well as volunteer recruitment and training in those communities.

In the beginning, I must admit I had a very limited idea of the use of mediation, and my mind never discerned the connection between mediation and conflict resolution. Nevertheless as I learned more and more about the programs offered by the agency where I am assigned, a clear picture began to form, and I could see the real importance of the services we rendered.

I work for the Conflict Resolution Center of the West Shore Inc. in Westlake, Ohio. At present the agency offers truancy, family, and neighbor mediation, bully prevention, gun safety, and peer and basic mediation training. We conduct two anger management classes per month for teens and adults and teach conflict resolution to various residents in different locals. We conduct private, one-on-one anger management consultations for a fee, and we host summer peace camps for youth and other organized fun/peaceful activities.

Since I began in November 2005, I have participated in conflict resolution/bully prevention sessions with children in a YMCA childcare program, participated in middle school health fairs, assisted with a peer mediation training, conducted numerous truancy mediations, assisted with a couple of in-school bullying prevention classes. I have also taught about six or seven anger management classes to teens and have provided a number of one-on-one sessions with individual teens needing to learn anger management techniques. During these activities, I

listened and heard from adults and youth many personal stories echoing fear, anguish, and apprehension regarding past and future relationships. I heard about endeavors that appear in jeopardy of estrangement, and/or certain disappointment due to the inability, or lack of skills, to meet the challenge of various oncoming conversations. I became filled with compassion and empathy for these members of the community, and committed myself to the services to be provided.

As I studied to familiarize myself with various curricula, I began to employ the learned skills in my daily life, and put them to the test and through the fire. Each time I succeeded in establishing my ground, holding firm in the face of angry outbursts, and avoiding muted silence, I could sense a spirit of well-being through accomplishment. These personal successes became my strength and determination to relay the required information to our agency's many consumers. I became a living witness to the power of anger management, conflict resolution, bully prevention, and the processes of mediation to make a positive difference in the way one addresses, triggers, and challenges in everyday life.

Now I believe it is essential to market our service to wider bands of our population. Anger management, conflict resolution, bully prevention, and mediation are all processes of communication where age, gender, nationality, or financial income creates no bounds. The only boundaries are learning or not learning, and knowing or not knowing the skills and techniques of how to engage in promising conversation.

In closing, I hope this message will serve to inspire many community mediators to continue with great effort to reach out, teach, and serve as many as possible.

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Community Mediation AmeriCorps

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the country, fostering partnerships and civic engagement for peace. NAFCM and AmeriCorps are working together to make our vision of stronger, interconnected communities a reality.

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Surrogate Circles

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movement in our communities afford law students an incredible opportunity to train and develop as leaders in a field that cries out for standards and creativity," she wrote, "The most important benefit of teaching restorative justice in a law school is that the students develop the vision, the skills, and the passion to positively transform our justice system."

The introduction of restorative practices to this controversial area was a great learning opportunity for everyone involved. The speakers experienced empowerment and healing, the men learned about empathy, and the facilitators learned what has the most impact on the participants. The information gained in these circles can be used to modify the next ones to provide an even more moving experience.

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Book Review

Institutionalizing Restorative Justice review by Russ Immarigeon

Institutionalizing Restorative Justice

Edited by Ivo Aertsen, Tom Daems and Luc Robert

Willan Publishing

\$45.00 (paper), 313 + xx pages (2006)

The Belgian editors of this new collection of articles open with a reference to a study, several years ago, that listed the publication of more than 60 volumes in the ten-year span between 1993 and 2003. As one of the authors of this article observed, "No other justice practice has commanded so much scholarly attention in such a short period of time." In response, the editors, all associated with the Catholic University of Leuven, note that the flow of "restorative justice" books continues. Offhand, I can think of at least 20 in the past few years. Plus, as the editors suggest, there are "numerous publications in Dutch, French, German, Spanish and other languages that are largely not accessible to the English-speaking community (that) have seen the light of day."

Ivo Aertsen, Tom Daems and Luc Robert gamely take this as a challenge for them to justify yet another collection of articles on restorative justice. So, right-off, the editors state that this collection will focus on institutionalizing restorative justice, or focus "on how RJ finds its way into contemporary societies and their respective criminal justice systems." It is not, however, a practical guide to institutionalization. Rather, it is intended to bridge the gap between practitioners who work on establishing programs and theorists and other observers who "reflect on developments in the field of punishment and social control."

Articles

The articles in this volume, a dozen in all, were largely presented, originally, at a 2004 conference on "The Institutionalization of Restorative Justice," which was held at the Department of Criminal Law and Criminology of the Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium. The article writers in this collection are mostly well known and established academics from Belgium, Canada, France, New Zealand, the Netherlands, the United States, and the United Kingdom. Overall, these articles cover the broad social context for the institutionalization of restorative justice, recent processes of

institutionalizing restorative justice, and more general analyses of the institutionalization of restorative justice.

Michael Tonry of the University of Minnesota opens with the observation that little is linear between crime and punishment, and therefore it is imaginable and feasible to establish "different reactions to *similar* crime problems." Tonry also notes those conditions, such as the existence of Aboriginal cultures, non-moralistic cultural traditions, low levels of politicizing criminal justice policy, non-partisan criminal justice practitioners, dispersed governmental political authority, and modest traditions of harsh penalty structures, that "conduce or constrain the initiation and elaboration of RJ initiatives."

Dutch scholar Hans Boutellier examines the relationship between public safety and restorative justice, and New Zealand-based historical sociologist John Pratt observes that restorative justice reforms can be linked to earlier "evangelical" reforms of the 19th-century as well as the alternatives to incarceration movement of the 1980s. Pratt also observes that restorative justice-based reforms often share characteristics with emotive and frequently punitive developments.

At the core of **Institutionalizing Restorative Justice** the editors present case studies, six in all, from Belgium, Canada, England and Wales, France and the Netherlands that focus on recent examples of the institutionalization of restorative justice. Ivo Aertsen describes a mix of prison-based victim-offender mediation, conferencing and restorative justice programs in Belgium where programs are being developed for both juveniles and adults. John Blad notes that restorative justice in the Netherlands is emerging in informal justice practices, such as in neighborhoods, schools and the workplace. Adam Crawford examines youth justice restorative justice initiatives in the context of recent political aspects of crime policies and practices. He identifies tensions between those who are management-oriented (professional) and those who are more flexible in approach (citizen-based). In another article, Jacques Faget distinguishes the autonomous and dependent institution-

alization of penal mediation in France. Jurist Kent Roach criticizes the limited application and applicability of restorative justice in Canada. And, Robert MacKay examines policy group development of restorative justice principles and practices in England and Wales. MacKay gives critical attention to the need for group dialogue on eight important issues – the relationship between restorative justice practice and the legal system, the relevance of rights, the general importance of volunteerism, proportionality on reparative agreements, restorative justice as process or outcome, the utility or impact of remorse, matters of neutrality and impartiality, and regulation-oriented aspects of expressed principles.

Later articles in this collection include Pat O'Malley's valuable discussion of the relationship between risk and restorative justice (with reflection on drug harm minimization programs), and Roger Matthews' estimation that recent empirical studies have highlighted important critiques of restorative justice (including its worth in reducing recidivism). Barbara Hudson, the sole female contributor to the volume, examines several critical issues, including "the blurred conception of community" in restorative justice.

Conclusion

In the end, while the matter of "institutionalizing" restorative justice is indeed important, the editors have only begun to scratch the surface of this topic. This in itself is a valuable service, but more needs to be done. As the fields of mediation and restorative justice form deeper and longer-lasting partnerships, it will be interesting to learn about how mediation, which has a longer history, has dealt with, or struggled with, the "institutionalization of mediation."

Moreover, in their closing commentary the editors examine the semantics of restorative justice, the internationalization of restorative justice, and the important matter of the gap between restorative justice ideals and their implementation.

Institutionalizing Restorative Justice can be obtained directly from ISBS, Inc., 920 NE 58th Ave., Suite 300, Portland, OR 97213-3786, (800) 944-6190, (website) www.isbs.com.

*Resources***New Resources for the Practice of Restorative Justice**

by Russ Immarigeon

Victims & Restorative Justice

British practitioners and theorists are producing a groundswell of work on restorative justice-related subjects. Among the latest contributions are a series of introductory volumes that offer valuable glimpses at the general field of restorative justice, the use of restorative justice in prison settings, the relationship between victims and restorative justice, and the relationship between victims and community justice, a close consort of restorative justice. Each of these volumes do an excellent job of integrating theory and practice, and all are recommended for those activists or citizens becoming involved with restorative justice for the first time, as well as for professionals who are engaging in the field as part of their career in criminal justice.

In **Criminal Punishment and Restorative Justice: Past, Present and Future Perspectives** (Waterside Press, \$49.95, 188 pages, 2006), former prison Governor David J. Cornwell provides comparative perspectives on the use of criminal punishment and restorative justice. In particular, Cornwell carefully examines "the forces that constrain more emphatic adoption of restorative methods against a background of increasing worldwide reliance on (penal) custody, 'tough solutions,' and punitive thinking." Cornwell affirms the ability of restorative justice to reverse these trends "by challenging offenders to take responsibility for their offenses and to make practical reparation for the harm that they have caused – developments that would serve to make corrections more effective, civilized, humane, pragmatic, non-fanciful and less driven by the often ill-considered politics of the moment." This volume also contains commentary from an important set of international observers of restorative justice, including Judge Fred McElrea (New Zealand), John R. Blad (The Netherlands), and Robert B. Cormier (Canada). **Criminal Punishment and Restorative Justice** can be obtained directly from ISBS, Inc., 920 NE 58th Ave., Suite 300, Portland, OR 97213-3786, (800) 944-6190, (website) www.isbs.com.

In **Understanding Victims and Restorative Justice** (Open University Press, 245 pages, 2005), James Dignan provides a profoundly helpful introduction to victims, victimization, victimology, victim-focused policymaking and restorative justice. In examining both the "victims' movement" and the "restorative justice movement," Dignan, who is Professor of Criminology and Restorative Justice at the University of Sheffield, sheds light on each. In particular, he laments "consensually acceptable definition," but nonetheless establishes functional frameworks. In the end, he argues for greater realism in our assessment of restorative justice's strengths and weaknesses, for establishing additional criteria for assessing and measuring the value and worthiness of restorative justice, and for focusing greater attention on the need to balance the sometimes competing and seemingly conflicting interests that are stirred in the aftermath of criminal conduct. **Understanding Victims and Restorative Justice** can be obtained at (website) www.openup.co.uk.

In **Victims of Crime and Community Justice** (Jessica Kingsley Publishers, \$28.95, 176 pages, 2005), Brian Williams makes an aggressive effort to capture the processes that various policymaking bodies have attempted, in recent decades, to change the planned and incidental ways we consider victims and offenders, and especially their relationship to one another, in the criminal justice system. Williams, who is a Professor of Community Justice and Victimology at De Montfort University in Leicester, is keenly aware that not everything done in the service of victims (or offenders for that matter) is necessarily for the best (or even for the better). Accordingly, his account is stimulating and challenging, as he addresses theoretical topics such as community justice or restorative justice, as well as day-to-day practice issues such as victim compensation payments, keeping victims informed of what the criminal justice system is doing with offenders, and the provision of direct services to victims themselves. Williams argues

that we should address practices that go beyond "the ideal victim," meet victims' needs without attaching offenders' rights, and take a more balanced and broader approach to addressing victims' needs. **Victims of Crime and Community Justice** can be obtained from Jessica Kingsley Publishers, PO Box 960, Herndon, VA 20172-0960, (866) 416-1078, (website) www.jkp.com.

Prison-based Restorative Justice

In the United States, practitioners and reform advocates have dabbled with the use of restorative justice in prisons. In fact, a few good empirical and practice-centered articles or reports have appeared. A decade ago (or so) I wrote a brief report on the subject for the Mennonite Central Committee. At the time, as is now the case, there was scattered interest, but nothing systemic or institutionalized. So it is of interest to see the topic examined in greater detail. In **Restorative Justice in Prisons** (Waterside Press, 134 pages, 2006), Kimmitt Edgar and Tim Newell introduce the main aspects of restorative justice theory and principles, identify the possible use(s) of restorative justice in prison settings, describe six dimensions of a prison-based organizational "culture web" (power structures, organizational structures, control systems, routines and rituals, myths and stories, and symbols), suggest feasible approaches to implementing restorative justice in prisons, clarify recent British trends, and propose a range of challenges facing the introduction of restorative justice into prisons. Taking a more hands-on, practical approach to their subject, Edgar and Newell, a policy advocate and a former prison Governor, not only describe specific prison-based restorative justice projects, but also detail a list of areas wherein restorative justice can be feasibly applied, including sentence planning, mediation, staff awareness of victim needs, prisoner awareness of restorative justice and networking. They warn, rightfully I think, of "faltering first steps" and

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public misunderstanding and apprehension. In the end, they say, "traditional prison culture cannot be seen as adequate to the demands of social inclusion, resettlement and reintegration." **Restorative Justice in Prisons** can be obtained directly from ISBS, Inc., 920 NE 58th Ave., Suite 300, Portland, OR 97213-3786, (800) 944-6190, (website) www.isbs.com.

Restorative Justice Journals

Restorative justice continues to receive extensive coverage in academic and reform journals. In the latest issue of the ever reliable, always intriguing **Contemporary Justice Review** (Vol. 9, No. 2, June 2006), four articles focus on restorative justice issues: Gay Maxwell and Hennessey Hayes survey extensive developments on restorative justice practices in the Pacific region, where customary practices play as important a role as recent family group conferencing initiatives (this article is a expanded version of an article the authors prepared for inclusion in **A Handbook of Restoration Justice**, edited by Gerry Johnstone and Daniel W. Van Ness, that Willan Publishing is releasing in the next few months); International Bar Association attorney Lorna McGregor assesses the introduction of reconciliatory (versus human rights) approaches to situations, such as those found in Sri Lanka and South Africa, that involve mass atrocities; Canadian criminologist Kimberly N. Varma reports empirical findings that suggest the public is more favorably disposed to the use of restorative justice in cases involving youthful offenders when it has more, rather than less, information about the offender's background and current situation; and British academics Amanda Robinson and Dee Cook examine the causes and consequences of "victim retraction" in cases in specialized domestic violence courts that include "strong multi-agency partnerships."

Editor Dennis Sullivan also offers some insightful comments on the rush to incarcerate, and otherwise up the punitive ante against, sex offenders in many states. **Subscriptions to Contemporary Justice Review** are \$68 for four issues a year; they are available from Taylor & Francis, Journals

Dept., 325 Chestnut Ave., 8th Fl., Philadelphia, PA 19106, (215) 625-8900, www.tandf.co.uk/journals. Information about receiving the journal as part of membership in the Justice Studies Association, which costs \$38 to \$78 per year depending on income, is available at www.justicestudies.org.

Also recently released is a new issue of John Charlton's **Restoration Directions Journal** and the results are quite interesting on two accounts. First, the journal has a new format and it actually looks like a journal, complete with glued binding. More importantly, the issue, dated May 2006, contains 11 articles, most of which cover topics related to the issue's theme, *Women, Incarceration and Restorative Justice*. More specifically, Natasha Durich reviews restorative options for female offenders; Alison Pedlar, Felice C. Yuen and Julie E. Thompson describe a restorative justice approach toward working with imprisoned women; P.J. Verrecchia and Dominique T. Chlup, in separate articles, examine restorative justice as a gender-specific option for delinquent females and adult women; Mary E. Gilfus asks if restorative justice can restore justice for women under correctional control; Monica K. Miller identifies methods of avoiding policies that harm children, women and society; and Carolyn Boyes-Watson looks into peacemaking circles that are used with young women in poor communities.

Articles in this volume are of mixed length and are peer-reviewed. In one article, a prison-based program for women, aimed at increasing interaction between incarcerated women and community-based volunteers, nurtured opportunities for restorative justice as it established a sense of community within the prison. In another article, caution is given about the limits of restorative justice, because of some women's minimal connection to community, the nature of their offenses, or their history of being physically or sexually abused, and the need for societal acceptance of its responsibility for conditions of inequality and injustice. Yet another article asserts that, while useful, peacemaking circles are not a panacea. Overall, this collection of articles delves, in timely fashion, into the under-explored area of women's incarceration and the impact

of restorative justice on women's lives. The cost for a two-year (4 issue) subscription to the **Restorative Directions Journal** is \$48.00US or \$55.50Canadian, which includes postage. To subscribe, contact John Charlton, Publishing Editor, **Restorative Directions Journal**, PO Box 511, Tweed, Ontario, Canada K0K-3J0, (613) 478-1052, (e-mail) john@rdj.ca, (website) www.rdj.ca.

FGCs & Child Custody

A recent issue of **The British Journal of Social Work** (Vol. 36, No. 4: June 2006) contains two articles of interest to those readers who follow international developments with the use of family group conferences. In the first, Marie Connolly, the Chief Social Worker with the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services in New Zealand reports on the professional experience of Care and Protection Coordinators, who use FGCs in child care and custody cases. In the article, Connolly, who has widened extensively on FGCs, is especially interested in examining how, over the first fifteen years of the New Zealand legislation inaugurating the use of FGCs worldwide, these professionals became involved with this work, how they interpreted the legislation, what keeps them on the job, and how they manage tensions among various child care and custody models. In the second article, Margaret Bell and Kate Wilson, writing from England, examine the perspectives of 20 children between the ages of six and sixteen who were involved with a FGC pilot project. Bell and Wilson note, "(The children) mostly valued the experience of being consulted and welcomed opportunities for families to develop relationships and work together on issues, free from the attentions of social services." **The British Journal of Social Work** is available from Oxford University Press, Journals Customer Service Department, 2001 Evans Rd., Cary, NC 27513, (800) 853-7323.

Native Americans and Restorative Justice

The mediation, restorative justice, and social justice literature is replete with references to inspiring and inviting

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indigenous people's statements or perspectives, but less evident is an understanding of the social, economic and legal context from which emerge practices such as family group conferencing or peacemaking circles. This is unfortunate for many reasons, so it is fortunate that Jeffrey Ian Ross and Larry Gould, of the University of Baltimore and of Northern Arizona University respectively, have edited **Native Americans and the Criminal Justice System** (Paradigm Publishers, 2006, \$35.00). In this vital new collection of 16 articles, three stand out as especially relevant for those of us working in mediation and restorative justice. In these articles James W. Zion examines the simultaneous rebirth of traditional indigenous law and the emergence of restorative justice (Zion feels both have come about, in part, because of growing disenchantment of typical state processes); William Archambeault examines "the antithetical differences" between "native and prison management subcultures" (Archambeault laments the foreign environment of penal institutions and reports on struggles to establish Native American healing ceremonies); and Marianne O. Nielsen, Dorothy Fulton and Ivan Tsosie examine "culturally knowledgeable and sensitive services to youth, their families and their community" (Nielsen and her colleagues argue that the more Navajo control their programs, the more likely Navajo content will prevail). Other articles cover Navajo justice, criminalizing culture, environmental policy, law enforcement and policing, treaty rights, gaming, and juvenile delinquency. Of critical importance, the editors state, is our understanding of the role of colonialism not only on the state of indigenous communities, but also on the state of indigenous practices. *For copies, contact Paradigm Publishers, 3360 Mitchell Ln., Suite E, Boulder, CO 80301, (800) 887-1591, (website)*

www.paradigmpublishers.com.

Victims & Restorative Justice

Adam Crawford and Tom Burden, who are associated with the U.K.-based Center for Criminal Justice Studies and the Policy Research Institute at the University of Leeds, have written a valuable report on integrating crime

victims into restorative justice practice. Crime victims, of course, ought to be at the center of restorative justice, along with criminal offenders, but the actual integration of victims into the restorative justice process is complex, and sometimes even difficult to achieve. **Integrating Victims in Restorative Youth Justice** (The Policy Press, \$26.95, 2005) empirically examines qualitative and quantitative data from a six-month cohort of cases handled in the year 2004 by the Restorative Justice Team of the Leeds Youth Offending Service. This research investigation found that victim involvement is typically low, but that Victim Liaison Officers are especially helpful for assuring "appropriate (victim) role and voice." Key findings include: victim absence raises significant concerns about victim representation; often, victims are informed only when they make the appropriate request; victim contact work is labor-intensive, especially when businesses or corporations are involved; and victims should be given alternative means of having input into restorative justice meetings. Overall, victims were highly satisfied with the Leeds Youth Offending Services Restorative Justice Team. *For copies, contact International Specialized Book Services, Inc., 920 NE 58th Ave., Suite 300, Portland, OR 97213-3786, (503) 287-3093.*

Coercion & Restorative Justice

In a recent article, "Restorative Justice: Misunderstood and Misapplied," Ohio State University social worker Rudolph Alexander, Jr. raises critical concerns about the use of legal or legislative coercion for offenders to apologize or state remorse, a matter Alexander argues is at odds with the core principles of restorative justice. In particular, Alexander examines cases and codes in several states, including California, Georgia, Indiana, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Texas, that "permit prosecutors, juries, and judges to consider the lack of a defendant's remorse or the lack of a defendant exhibiting remorse from the arrest to imposition of a sentence." Alexander observes that defendant's often have sound legal and other reasons for not apologizing or expressing remorse, including innocence, corrupt criminal justice practices, protecting the ability to appeal, etc. Alexander also examines how victims, victim

families, victim counselors, and mental health practitioners can establish an environment that coerces offenders to apologize or express remorse. Lastly, Alexander finds "a growing body of research and literature that suggest(s) that taking responsibility does not lead to rehabilitation. Forced to accept unequivocal blame or responsibility by treatment professionals, offenders invariably embrace the 'bad' self, become depressed, and commit further criminal behaviors." *This article appeared in the Journal of Policy Practice (Vol. 5, No. 1, 2006, pp. 67-81), which can be obtained from The Haworth Press, Inc., 10 Alice St., Binghamton, NY 13904-1580, (800) 429-6784.*

Publication seeking writers

Life Blossoms is an effort to combine the poetry and prose of both the immediate family members (e.g., spouse, sibling, parent, child, grandchild, or grandparent) of homicide victims as well as individuals who have been convicted of homicide offenses. The goal is to establish a "dialogue of healing" for all those who have been impacted by such crimes.

Anyone among these two groups of individuals who would like to find out more or would like to participate in this project, may contact **Life Blossoms** directly or at its website. The program will send you a packet of information detailing an overview of the project, guidelines for submission of works, and where to send your material.

Interested parties who have completed victim/offender dialogue/mediation in a homicide case and would like to share their experiences or success stories should mail an inquiry. It is anticipated that the final outcome of this endeavor will result in a publication that will be used to promote Victim Offender Reconciliation Programs (VORPs) that involve homicide cases throughout the country.

For more information, please contact Life Blossoms, PO Box 321, Cliffwood, NJ 07721-0321, (e-mail) life_blossoms_info@yahoo.com, www.geocities.com/life_blossoms_info.

Mini-grant Report

Building Relationships across Race, Ethnic Differences: VOMA and PRASI Collaborative Training Restorative Justice and Anti-Racism Training Work
by Millicent Carvalho

The Victim Offender Mediation Association (VOMA) and the Practitioners Research Scholarship Institute (PRASI) established a Restorative Justice and Anti-Racism Training initiative to provide an interactive learning experience that reflects “best practices” in engaging restorative justice practitioners to effectively conduct anti-racism work. Collaborators on the project included Barbara Raye, VOMA administrator; Drew Smith former VOMA board member; S.Y. Bowland, PRASI consultant; Hassan Batts, NAFCM board member and myself, a 2002-03 PRASI Fellow.

We chose to examine the unique form of white racism found in North American society and to deconstruct the culture of “white privilege.” On June 10-11, 2006, an anti-racism training was held in Miami at the Institute of Evidence-Based Practice Conference as a two-day training. The response was overwhelmingly favorable. Participants commented that they liked the new perspective and information exchange among themselves and trainers. There was also ample time for self-reflection as well as self-evaluation. In addition, participants commented that the historical perspective of racism and information on Indian disenfranchisement and slave ships was particularly helpful.

Why do restorative practitioners need anti-racism training? Training is needed because realizing social justice ideals in restorative justice practices requires anti-racism work. Most restorative justice practitioners would agree that racism continues to be a problem in the criminal justice system, hurting victims, offenders and the community. Many of us have first-hand knowledge of situations where victims were treated unfairly, offenders received unfair sentencing, and communities received uneven protection because of racism and classism. The U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics shows that incarceration rates for African Americans are six times higher than mainstream populations. Moreover, according to the Opportunity Agenda: (www.opportunityagenda.org), state and federal laws that were enacted from the 1970s through 1990s have had a disproportionate racial impact.

Reflecting on my own experience, as a participant in a national instructors train-

ing held in part at Graterford Prison in Pennsylvania, I could not help but notice the disproportionate numbers of African American and Latino inmates. I was at Graterford to learn an innovative teaching model that covered everything necessary to teach a course inside a correctional institution. While at Graterford, I also had the opportunity to meet with a lifer’s group, “the think tank,” which serves in an advisory capacity to the Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program: Exploring Issues of Crime and Justice Behind the Walls offered by Lori Pompa (Temple University) and Melissa Crabbe. In addition, I noticed that my perceptions about incarcerated populations, crime, and punishment reflected my own worldview and were shaped by my identity as an African-American woman and my experience in working mainly with female victims. My perceptions were definitely changed by my experiences at Graterford.

Should restorative justice professionals examine their own worldviews, in order to recognize their own beliefs, assumptions and behaviors, and their impact on anti-racism work? Is that a rhetorical question? Maybe. Anti-racism work must include dismantling racism, classism and gender discrimination on an interpersonal level as well as systemic and global levels. First, however, we have to make visible white privilege, which is often invisible, especially in diversity situations. Therefore a central theme of the anti-racism training was the process of unpacking “the invisible knapsack” of white privilege as described by Peggy McIntosh (1991).

Seldom, however, does anti-racism training aim to help participants to deconstruct “white privilege” and gain a greater understanding of the values that support white privilege and oppression of the “other.” This process is an innovative feature of the anti-racism training.

Another unique feature of the training is the understanding that anti-racism learning can produce conflict within an individual and between individuals. Conflict defined as a negative emotion or negative affect must be managed in a positive manner. Drawing upon their conflict transformation training and knowledge of

affect management theory, the trainers structured a learning environment that was supportive and physically and emotionally safe. Our goal was to maximize participants’ capacity for empathy so that participants would identify the presence of racism and oppression during the work of restorative justice and understand its impact on African Americans and other people of color. Participants also had opportunities to practice techniques they could employ in their own communities and organizations.

Racism won’t end until everyone is willing to give up all privileges based on skin color, hair texture, etc. Moreover, white allies must be willing to fight against racism as well as hold other white people accountable for the privileges extended to them because of skin color, even those privileges for which they did not ask. In **Dismantling Racism: The Continuing Challenge to White America**, Joseph Barndt (1991) offers: “Every white person participates in and benefits from the system of racism, even if it is against our will.” Therefore, key components of the anti-racism training involve building allies, diversity-sensitivity and the use of advocacy, listening and facilitation skills needed to influence outcomes in agencies, courts and community settings.

Nelson Mandela said education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world. It is our hope that the VOMA and PRASI Restorative Justice and Anti-Racism Training initiative will at least change the world of restorative justice practice.

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ice doing yard and maintenance work at her church.

The judge agreed, and each of the boys worked on a different Saturday each month for five months, alongside volunteers from the church. They started with grass cutting and weeding in August, helped paint the inside of the church in the fall, and finished with repairs and snow shoveling in December. Sally and her husband volunteered once with each of the boys during that time. Her hope was that the boys would feel more connected to the community if they spent time with church volunteers. After spending a day with Sally and her husband doing yard work, the boys at the very least knew their victim as a real person.

Even though the young men have not re-offended one year after the robbery, it is still too soon to tell if the boys have changed their ways. Sally feels more comfortable passing youth in the community, and members of her church have decided to continue working with youthful offenders referred by the court. Not one cent passed between the victim and the offenders, but restitution (or amends - or satisfaction - or relief) was clearly achieved in this case.

What Victims Want

Some things that victims have reported finding helpful include:

- Being informed about the legal process;
- Attending court hearings;
- A victim-offender conference or dialogue, if requested by the victim;
- An apology letter or video tape explaining why the offense was wrong;
- Knowing that the offender completed some meaningful community service;

- An essay by the offender explaining what they learned from their experience; and
- Knowing that the offender had followed their court order and stayed out of trouble.

When people are victimized, they report a wide range of feelings, including the following: alarm, anger, anxiety, confusion, defeat, depression, despair, determination, disgust, embarrassment, fear, frustration, guilt, helplessness, hostility, panic, rage, regret, resentment, shame, shock, suspicion, targeted, vengeance and violation

Not everyone has the same feelings about being victimized; nor do they find the same things helpful in terms of restitution. Victims need reassurance that what they are feeling is okay and typical among those who have had similar experiences. They need someone who will listen to them in a caring and non-judgmental manner.

Victims understandably want to have financial restitution for their loss. The community at large deserves restitution in terms of community service projects that either give back to the community or work to repair the harm. Participation in victim-offender conferencing or a group conference that includes those who offended and those who have been affected is often considered restitution. Whatever happens, it is important that restitution (however it is defined) not be overlooked in the rush and hustle of the criminal justice system.

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AmeriCorps In New Orleans*Continues from page 7*

ference between an organization imploding or being extremely effective.

Neighborhood associations could also be trained in mediation and facilitation skills, allowing them to continue engaging in difficult dialogues on racism and building trust. Perhaps interest- or need-based negotiations skills workshops could be taught, especially for those groups that work directly with FEMA officials, thus transforming a limited "win-lose" bargaining mentality into one that is more "interest-based." Training leaders from neighborhood associations in mediation skills is another idea that would possibly transform a community's relationship with the police.

It's best to stay creative and to think beyond just "community mediation." The AmeriCorps volunteers have done just that. Perhaps Steve best summarized this idea, "I'm always looking for ways to use mediation and mediation skills as part of the healing process."

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Justice Connections is interested in publishing articles that describe, evaluate or reassess restorative justice and community mediation practices for various cases in different national and international jurisdictions. Often times practitioners are isolated from one another, and articles are one way of communicating what works, what does not work, and what may be done to make things work. Please send program information, program evaluations and so forth to:

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Third of Four Parts

"We Need Our Conflicts to Make Us Strong"

by Jarem Sawatsky

One of the fastest ways to make a people weak, so that they can be ruled over, is to steal their conflicts. This is often one of the first steps of a colonial government, which usually takes control of conflicts through criminalizing harms. A new perspective takes over when harms are made into crimes. Traditionally, when someone harms another person, there has been a community process to address both the symptoms and the roots of what has happened. This has meant "making things right" not just with the victim but also with the wider family and community surrounding both the harmed and the harmer.

When a harm becomes a crime, the victim is left out because the "justice" system takes control, defining crime more in terms of breaking governmental law than of harming a person or a community. The government takes the role of the victim. The crime is taken out of the context of community and put into the context of the legal system. The key players change. Where once there were elders offering insight and wisdom, now a judge sits and dispenses decisions about the rules. Where once uncles and aunts were involved (respected people in the community) now professional lawyers replace them. Where a community once came together to talk about the best ways to live, now a court discusses the legal facts of the case in front of a jury of strangers. Conflicts are stolen from the communities where they have occurred by those from the outside who would rule over them and by those from the outside who think they know what others need and would wish to help them. In either case, this sort of ruling and such helping makes communities weaker.

But communities need conflicts in order to strengthen the community. In responding to conflicts, we renew our identity and collectively make sense of the world around us. In responding to conflict, we return to the teachings and traditions that engage the brokenness and the hope of the world around us.

In this article, I will focus on guideposts that will direct the use of peacebuilding

in such a way that makes communities stronger. These guideposts encourage peacebuilders to use conflict to make communities strong by using facilitators who are part of the local setting, by examining whether a conflict should be increased rather than decreased, and by linking particular cases and issues to larger social-system change processes.

Peacebuilding Practice That Redefines Unjust Relationships Favors Second Party Amateurs To Third Party Professionals

Who facilitates liberating peacebuilding practice? There are mediators, lawyers, police, and court adjudicators (professionals who are paid for their work) who advocate models that put them at the center of the process. This professional orientation tends toward seeing the role of facilitator as a third-party neutral – someone with no ties and no bias to either group. This general principle of impartiality is one of the guiding principles of the court justice system. And yet, despite this assurance of impartiality, the jails of so-called "developed" countries are full of marginalized ethnic groups that the dominant society is still trying to "civilize." The outcome of this impartial justice is not impartial at all.

Traditionally, most peoples dealt with conflict in their own communities by going to a mutually known person or trusted friend – a second party amateur. This was most often someone of high character with good community relations who helped others not for money, but out of care and love. An amateur linguistically means "for the love of it" and does not imply being less than the professional. Communities need amateur peacebuilders far more than professional ones. The indigenous understanding of healing in Fiji, for instance, is that healing is a gift from the Creator and therefore healers cannot charge for their work. This is not particular to Fiji but common to most traditional understanding of who responds to the fallout from conflict and social change interactions.

Asking who facilitates the experience of healing and justice is a good way to uncover underlying assumptions and

orientations. A top-down, process-driven, technique-oriented, institutional approach will always favour a qualified, certified professional over a trusted, known, caring elder. Liberating peacebuilding practice will find ways of working with, in and through local peacebuilders.

Peacebuilding Practice That Redefines Unjust Relationships Must Have The Capacity And Desire To Increase Conflict Not Just Decrease Conflict

To simply resolve whatever conflicts arise will likely result in enabling the status quo. Decreasing conflict oils the machine, strengthens the state, and maintains social order. Decreasing conflict does not necessarily have anything to do with real justice or real peace. Leading conflict transformation practitioners, like Adam Curle and John Paul Lederach recognize that we must have the capacity to know when and how to escalate conflict before trying to solve it. Increasing conflict helps to balance power, raise awareness, unleash creativity, educate masses, establish justice relationships and create the desire for recognition and coming together. Communities in conflict need to distinguish between those conflicts that need to be resolved and those that contain the seeds and nutrients of radical social change.

Restitution as "payment to get this behind us" may be a way of decreasing conflict rather than entering into conflict to see how we all might be transformed. Such payments for reconciliation are often resolved in such a way that the institutional racism and cultural genocide that lies at the base of the conflict are avoided and the real story is never told. This kind of justice without truth does not lead to sustainable healing. A liberating peacebuilding approach must not jump to single-track, quick fix financial resolution of cases but must be designed with the capacity to increase conflict with the goal of transforming systems and people.

Conflicts

continued from previous page

The challenge of liberating peacebuilding is to find ways of confronting injustice while at the same time building up positive justice. This double task must always be present in each moment. Each moment is pregnant with the seeds of the future. To use violence to stop violence only continues the cycles of violence. To use a cheap peace without justice to stop violence also continues the cycles of violence. The challenge of liberating peacebuilding is to invent or rediscover non-violent mechanisms that have the capacity to address the deep roots of conflicts, even if this means increasing the conflict.

Peacebuilding Practice That Redefines Unjust Relationships Has The Capacity To Link Individual Cases And Issues To Larger Social-Systemic Change Processes

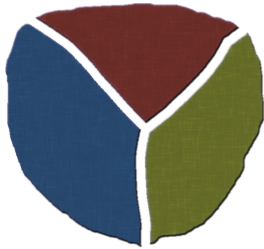
Approaches to conflict that only see as far as the current case are unable to proactively and strategically address

social-systemic change. Ovide Mercredi, former Grand Chief of the Assembly of First Nations of Canada said it this way, "System issues of oppression can not be solved on a case-based model". Liberating peacebuilding practice looks not just at how to appropriately address specific harms but also at how to evoke social-systemic change so that this type of cultural imposition will be stopped in all areas of public life.

One of the great harms of the whole modern system is that it is not a whole system at all. Modern systems work on breaking things apart, specialization and micro processes. In court settings testimony is not given in the form of whole stories but small fragments that are deemed admissible. It should not be surprising that such processes – even when working – often leave people feeling broken. While the peacebuilding field sees itself more as more about putting things together and than taking apart, the field has been prone to simply using alternative micro processes that work on a case-by-case basis.

This modern micro focus is unable to see the larger whole. Rather, it sees the people involved in particular cases, but often misses the socio-economic and historical patterns that have enabled the specific micro story. Simply resolving disputes and rebuilding relationships does not necessarily engage systems of injustice. In fact, resolving disputes usually helps systems of injustice to work more smoothly.

Jarem Sawatsky, who can be reached at 32 Hallgate, Cottingham, East Yorkshire, HU16 4DJ, United Kingdom, is currently a PhD student in the UK researching traditional communities conceptions of healing justice. Previously he served as Co-Coordinator of the Peace and Conflict Transformation Studies Department at the Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg, Manitoba. This article was originally published, in slightly different form, as "Suggested Guideposts for the Use of Peace and Conflict Praxis in Indigenous Context," Morung Express: Morungs for Indigenous Affairs and JustPeace (India), Sunday, September 19, 2005.



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