

Suzan Nolan

This has been a rich and rewarding year for me as President of the Board of Directors for the Center for Restorative Justice and as a volunteer mediator. It has been a year of personal growth for me as well. In November 2007, I went to Auschwitz for a week long retreat at the site of unspeakable horror and suffering. As I sat at the selection site where people disembarked from the trains and went to either the gas chamber or the barracks, I was filled with the horror and sadness of what happened to over a million people at this place alone. I sat in the barracks with my group, the Peacemakers, as we read the names of people who died there. The sadness of Auschwitz is palpable and, yet, the hope there is palpable, too.

Through the process of bearing witness to this event and participating in dialogue about how we can be peacemakers in the world, new ideas and new ways of thinking developed. At the Centre for Dialogue we became part of the dialogue for peace as we heard the testimony from one of our own group members from Rwanda who talked about the mass genocide she witnessed there between the Hutus and Tutsis in 1994. While this experience affected me deeply, I felt even more committed to bring whatever peace I can into the world. While murder on a large scale such as Auschwitz is hard to fathom, it has its correlates in the suffering that happens in people's lives from crimes and offenses committed against them. What we do as mediators in our community when we create the space where people can be heard and can talk about their pain is not so different from what happened in Auschwitz with our group when the young woman shared with us the trauma she had experienced in Rwanda. It is not so different from the Jewish mother and her daughter, whose mother and grandmother were killed at Auschwitz, and who were able to speak their pain into our circle. It is not so different from the German

woman from Berlin who had been to this retreat for six consecutive years, who came again to heal the pain of all that her country had done. It is not so different from the woman from Warsaw who remembers the pain of the program and the terror of those years or the artist who survived Auschwitz and has left a gallery of drawings expressing her experience.

Repairing the harm goes on every day at Auschwitz when young Israeli students come to dialogue with young Germans or young Poles. It continues when people from around the world, who are in conflict with each other, come there to bear witness to these atrocities and to enter into dialogue about how to repair the harm. These experiences fill me with hope that life can be different.

We trained 20 new mediators this year who will be able to take this restorative process into various parts of their lives. They will facilitate the healing that needs to occur in our community and our world. I am grateful to be part of this work and grateful to all who support our program either by being on the board, by telling others about what we do, through financial contributions or simply by lending us their good will. As Margaret Mead said, "Our first and most pressing problem is how to do away with warfare as a method of solving conflicts." Restorative justice is one of the ways to do that.

I am ending my second term as president of the Restorative Justice Board and will be turning over the reins to Nancy Clary, a wonderful trainer, mediator, board member, and friend. We will be in very capable hands with Nancy. I thank you for the opportunity to serve as President this year.

"An eye for an eye only makes the whole world blind". — Mahatma Gandhi

CFRJ Roars into the New Year!

Phyllis Boernke, Executive Director

March came roaring into South Dakota like a lion this year. I'm not sure that's a "peaceful" analogy to make about the Center for Restorative Justice but we are enthusiastically charging ahead into 2008 activities. The highlights are here. We invite you to contact us about any of these events - past, present and yet to be. Give us your suggestions for more ways to bring the restorative justice message to the community, become a member of our organization, attend our annual meeting and get involved in the training and community events that we sponsor.

- In February, we trained 14 new volunteer mediators, 4 of this group are receiving college credits for attending our training and shadowing our experienced mediators.

In June, our training will be offered for teacher recertification credits in the Rapid City Area Schools.

- In March, De Glasgow, one of our founding members and a volunteer mediator, was a guest speaker at our Youth In Action classes at Ninth Grade Academy, talking about how to be successful in today's world.
- In April, Michele Brink-Gluhosky, Director of Teen Court, will speak to the Youth in Action classes to help young people better understand consequences of their behavior.
- SANI-T has invited us to present restorative justice principles to the young people enrolled in their program and to be the guest presenter at the SANI-T community meeting for families on April 15.

Kansas City St
Rapid City SD

cfrj@rushmore.com
www.cfrj.org

Assisting
victims of crime,
offenders, and
their communities
to become whole
again through
mediation.

2007 Board of Directors

President, Suzan Nolan, EdD
President Elect, Nancy Clary
Past President, Barry Tice
Secretary, Diana Southam
Treasurer, Nancy Clary
Director, Dowell Caselli Smith
Director, Sharon Kallemeyn
Director, Laurette Pourier
Director, Jan Snedigar
Director, Janice Horner
Staff, Phyllis Boernke
Staff, Patricia Henry

SUPPORTED BY:

John T. Vucurevich Foundation
Gwendolyn Stearns Foundation
Dakota Charitable Foundation
Generous Individuals

- Our CFRJ Annual Meeting is Tuesday, April 8 at 5:30 pm at Emmanuel Episcopal Church. This potluck is a time to celebrate our accomplishments, elect officers for 2008 and set a course for the year.



Volunteer Mediator Training 2008”

- In May, Jamie Lee introduces the story of the “Bead People” and helps facilitate the “Bead People Project” as the culminating activity of our Youth In Action project at Ninth Grade Academy. A special surprise and give-away is planned as part of this event.

- And stayed tuned for our latest new undertaking: WALK FOR PEACE which we will introduce in May. Dust off your walking shoes and plan to join us and challenge your friends and family members to take part to raise money for restorative justice.

In this month’s issue we have included some recent quotes from volunteers and participants in our restorative justice practices. These testimonials are very moving to me as they touch the heart and soul of the transformative nature of the work that we do.

When I hear these words, I am proud to be part of this effort and I long for the day when restorative conversations become commonplace and are heard in our homes, our workplaces, our coffee shops and malls - everywhere that people gather together in relationships. I don’t think this is an impossible dream and I hope that you will join us to help this dream become a reality. To find out more about the work of restorative justice and our Center, our listing of valued volunteers and contributors and lots more, visit our website, www.cfrj.org



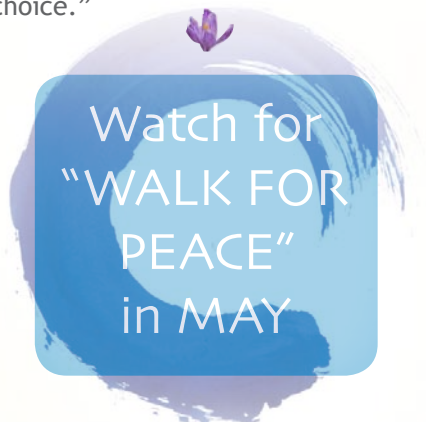
What is true peace?

The following excerpt is taken from “Creating True Peace” by Thich Nhat Hahn, Buddhist monk, author and one of the foremost activists for peace in the world today. There is relevance here for restorative justice as we seek to bring healing to those impacted by crime and conflict and to create a peaceful community.

“True peace is always possible. Yet it requires strength and practice, particularly in times of great difficulty. To some, peace and nonviolence are synonymous with passivity and weakness. In truth, practicing peace and nonviolence is far from passive. To practice peace, to make peace alive in us, is to actively cultivate understanding, love, and compassion, even in the face of misperception and conflict.

All of us can practice nonviolence. We begin by recognizing that, in the depths of our consciousness, we have both the seeds of compassion and the seeds of violence. . . .

We realize that, at any given moment, we can behave with either violence or compassion, depending on the strength of these seeds within us. . . . We know that if we water the seeds of anger, violence, and fear in us, we will lose our peace and our stability. We will suffer and we will make those around us suffer. But if we cultivate the seeds of compassion, we nourish peace within us and around us. With this understanding, we are already on the path of creating peace. . . . Peace is there for us in every moment. It is our choice.”



“All life is inter-related. We are all caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied into a single garment of destiny.” — Martin Luther King Jr.



929 Kansas City Street
Rapid City, SD 57701
605-348-3665
cfrj@rushmore.com
www.cfrj.org



A volunteer mediator’s perspective:

“The conversation with the person who feels so misunderstood was one of the deepest and most moving experiences of my life. By talking about her experience, she was able to get some clarity and see her part in the misunderstanding, and understand the pain of the other people who felt harmed.”

An offender speaking to a victim:

“I’m experiencing the results of my crime right now in jail, by paying restitution and by being on probation. But you will live the pain of what I did to you and your family for the rest of your life. You are suffering much more than I ever will. For that, saying I’m sorry will never be enough.”

A victim speaking about an offense:

“Yes, there was financial loss for our family. But the betrayal of the trust that I had in that person is a deep wound and makes it hard for me to trust anyone.”

A victim speaking to an offender:

“You have been hurt in this crime also. All I want now, after meeting you, is to keep in touch with you and know that your choices will be wiser and that your life will be better.”

