

Valencia Community College

Peace and Justice Initiative



The Initiative in Perspective:

Over the last two years the Peace and Justice Initiative of Valencia Community College has engaged in a period of inquiry. Building from the work of Parker Palmer, the Initiative has taken the last two years to look internally at our institution and ask the “big questions” in the form of World Cafes.

- What would peace look like at Valencia? Justice?
- What is the role of conflict in our lives and how might we learn to deal with conflict in a constructive way?
- What is forgiveness and how might developing a culture of forgiveness transform the Valencia community?

Across campuses, in meetings large and small, what has emerged from these conversations is a need to deepen the discussions. Specifically we need to explore models of non-violence and learn skills in healthy conflict resolution. In addition, we need to take these conflict transformation skills and strengthen the capacity of our culture of collaboration, ultimately embedding these values into the college ethos and the curriculum.

As a result of our two years of cross-college conversation, the Initiative has defined its mission, drafted five outcomes, and is now poised to move forward at the college. In addition to identifying

tools to help build our culture of collaboration through conflict transformation, we have begun the work of developing a Peace Studies curriculum with the aid of the Kroc International School of Peace Studies at Notre Dame. We are in partnership with Dr. Alma Jadallah from Kommon Denominator, Inc. and part time faculty at the Eastern Mennonite University and George Mason University and with Elaine Sullivan guiding our Parker Palmer work. We are also exploring the questions of non-violence with the intent to bring Michael Nagler, Faculty Emeritus from Berkeley University and author of *Searching for a Non-Violent Future*, to introduce and explore these issues with our students, faculty and the larger Central Florida Community.

To date, much of the work of peace studies and conflict transformation has taken place on a national level at private colleges and universities such as Notre Dame. We believe that integrating these concepts and skills into a large, urban, diverse public community college will exponentially increase the numbers of Americans exposed to these ideas. Community colleges are the route to the heart of America and a vital agency in shaping our students. Valencia Community College serves a socio-economically and culturally diverse demographic of 46,000 students on multiple campuses. We are ready to take the next steps in the Initiative, with two of the Strategic Goals of the college as the focus of our work:

- “Investing in Each Other” and,
- “Partnering with the Community”

We believe that by continuing to invest and train faculty, staff, administrators and students in conflict transformation, developing a peace studies curriculum, and addressing the issues of violence in our community, Valencia is poised to become a national model in this work.

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The college and the Initiative lost a dear friend and colleague, Dr. Philip Bishop. He guided us with his quiet wisdom. This dear gentleman will be missed.

Trainings and Service Projects, Spring 2010

February: Training in Conflict Transformation led by Dr. Alma Jadllah

June: Notre Dame University: *Teaching Peace in the 21st Century*, Faculty Workshop



Professor Dr. Judi Addeleston face painting the young children.



Sonlight the Clown, our colleague Iris Scammell.

April: Thirty-six Valencia faculty, staff and students attended the Spring Fling, a service project at the Coalition for the Homeless where they participated with resident families and children. Our own, Iris Scammell came dressed as Sonlight the Clown. Fun was had by all.



The Psychology Club of East Campus participates in the service project at the Coalition.

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Conflict Transformation Training is coming to Valencia.

The last weekend in February 2010 brought Dr. Alma Abdul-Hadi Jadallah to East Campus. Dr. Jadallah took time from her business Kommon Denominator which offers mediation in the Middle East and in the US, and her classes in Mediation and Conflict Transformation at George Mason, American University, and the Mennonite University to present a twenty hour training on Conflict transformation at Valencia. Twenty people: faculty, staff, and students joined in the study of conflict transformation and mediation. We studied strategies for understanding and dealing with conflict, and quickly came to an appreciation of the complexity of the field. We enjoyed identifying some home grown conflicts which we played out with dramatic abandon to the laughter and applause of all. These discussions, analysis and role play continue on both campuses; if you would like to be part of that study, let us know. The Peace and Justice Initiative will bring another training this fall when Dr. Jadallah returns Oct. 12th -17th .



Peace and Justice Mission:

All People, All Voices, All Matter: Making a difference by intentionally engaging in practices and principles that explore, advocate, and honor the dignity of self, others, and the earth.

2010-2011 Peace and Justice Initiative Calendar:

October 12th-17th - Fall Training in Conflict Transformation led by Dr. Alma Jadallah

October 28th - Prisoners of Conscience Around the World (Amnesty Event), Atrium, Bldg. 3, East Campus

October 30th - Fall Festival at Coalition for the Homeless

November 4th - World Café, Osceola Campus, 1:30 p.m.

November 18th - Multi-Faith Prayer Breakfast, East

December 9th "Potlatch: Peace Day Giveaway," East

January - Course Offering: Pax 1000: *Introduction to Peace Studies*, East and Osceola Campuses

January 25th -27th - Scholar-in-Residence: Dr. Michael Nagler, author of *The Search for a Nonviolent Future*

February 4th - 6th - Workshop: *Living the Peaceful Life*, Night Swan B&B, New Smyrna Beach

February 11th- Learning Day, *Teaching Peace in the 21st Century*

March - Service project, Spring Fling at the Coalition for the Homeless

March - Conflict Transformation Training with Dr. Alma Jadallah.