

The Purdue Peace Project Post

The mission of the Purdue Peace Project is to convene groups of local citizens in fragile states where clearly identified situations threaten to lead to political violence, and encourage and assist these citizens in their efforts to bring about peaceful solutions. In promoting locally-driven and inclusive approaches to peacebuilding, we seek to reduce the likelihood of political violence and contribute to lasting peace. In doing so, we also seek to add to the body of knowledge in this field by documenting and disseminating our work to practitioners and scholars alike.



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Quarterly Newsletter
ISSUE 12 April 2016

Linwood Ham of the United States Institute of Peace Joins the Purdue Peace Project to Discuss Peacebuilding

By Julia Donnelly, Courtney Bonness, Sarah Faulkner, and Caleb Schenck

On February 18th, Linwood Ham Jr. of the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) joined Purdue's Peacebuilding and Communication class taught by Purdue Peace Project Director, Dr. Stacey Connaughton. The students spoke with Ham for forty-five minutes about his work in the peacebuilding field as Director of the Global Policy Team for the United States Institute of Peace.

"Peace is not unattainable," Ham said. He stated that resolving conflict often involves joining forces to bring a set of nonviolent solutions to these conflicts. USIP functions in an effort to close the gap between state and society, bringing a set of nonviolent solutions to the table, enabling the transformative power of conflict. Though USIP receives its money from the Congress, it is not directly under the purview of the executive branch. It is a non-partisan sect of the U.S. government. This institute originated from ideas generated under the Carter administration and was expanded, developed, and signed into law by President Ronald Reagan in the United States Institute of Peace Act in 1984.

"We need to have the same commitment to creating peacebuilders as we have to creating warriors," Ham explained. Ham served in the military for 24 years before transitioning to a career in peacebuilding. In response to further questions, he revealed that his involvement in peacebuilding took some root within his past in the military--whilst in Colombia serving, Ham was struck by the realization that there was nothing to sustain military efforts to improve the region after the military withdrew from the area.

As Ham said, "It was clear that what the military would accomplish would not end violence in Colombia." This realization, coupled with a sense of duty as a result of his service, led to Ham's involvement in the United States Institute of Peace.

When asked about his personal philosophy that guides his actions and convictions, Ham said, "Violence is a choice. I want to be a part of making a different choice." He went on to explain his interpretation of peacebuilding as

something not idealistic or abstract, but rather as a set of "interventions that one puts into the natural state of man [that state being one of conflict]."

The United States Institute of Peace shares this idea of peacebuilding. Logistically, the USIP consists of three basic program centers, as outlined by Ham: functional, Asia, and Middle East and Africa. The functional program center encompasses transitional justice and the role of many key factors (such as law, religion, research and development, and the countering of violent extremism) in peacebuilding. The other two program centers, Asia as well as the Middle East and Africa, are both regionally focused. Ham explained how the USIP is selective and precise in their choice of who serves and aides in these regions particularly, but also in the institute as a whole. Ham shared with our class his desire to create peace through nonviolent methods. One area he highlighted was the role of gender in conflict. He says that peace is not a binary discussion--women need to be at the table to promote representative dialogue. He expressed that this representative dialogue should be with most all components as well, including interfaith discussions, socio-

economic inclusion, and (as mentioned before) gender inclusion.

Near the end of his talk, Ham said, "I seek to do things that will make a difference in the lives of others." This was evident by the passion and sincerity with which he addressed the next generation of scholars studying peacebuilding and communication. As a class, we are incredibly grateful for Linwood Ham's perspective on peacebuilding and for his taking time to meet with us and allowing us the chance to learn from him.



From Palestine to Purdue: A Lesson in Peacebuilding

By Kyle Bordner, Mykah Croom, Erica Timmons, and Abigail Yarcusko



On a chilly, February afternoon at Purdue University, a handful of freshman, Dammon Dean Scholars of the College of Liberal Arts gathered into their classroom to connect via Skype with Suheir "Suzy" Rasul, who was finishing her day thousands of miles away in the Middle East. Seeking to further familiarize themselves with peacebuilding and its practitioners around the globe, these eager students - who are enrolled in a course about peacebuilding taught by Dr. Stacey Connaughton, Director of the Purdue Peace Project - were given the opportunity to create meaningful conversation with a pioneer in the world of peacebuilding.

Suzy Rasul joined the class from her home in Palestine, where she moved eight years ago after a prolific career as a journalist in the United States. After earning her Master's degree in International Communications/Journalism, she worked as an Executive Producer at NBC and later as Managing Editor for Fox News in Memphis. Wanting to return to her family's native land of Palestine, Rasul took a position as Country Director in Jerusalem with the world's largest transformation organization, Search for Common Ground (SFCG), in 2008. Search for Common Ground's mission is to transform the way the world deals with conflict, away from adversarial approaches, toward cooperative solutions. Ms. Rasul's work as country director involves leading the media initiatives set out by SFCG. Currently, she is working on a reality TV show, *The President*, that encourages Palestinian youth to have a voice in the political and social arena by participating in a contest to be Palestine's 'president', becoming the winner of the show based on a combination of judges and a public vote. She also works with senior journalists in the area through SFCG's Common Ground Journalism training initiative.

Despite the late hour in Jerusalem, Rasul enthusiastically shared a glimpse of her daily life in what is globally recognized as a violence-prone conflict zone. Despite the numerous checkpoints she must cross on her commute to and from her office, Suzy shared that life is normal for her most of the time. She addressed how the media often skews the public image of life in her city, showing it ravaged by constant violence. "They never show you this part of life in Jerusalem," she remarked while talking about her normal daily routine that includes driving safely to work, dropping her kids off at school, and spending time with her family at restaurants and shops. She added playfully that while living in Palestine, she has missed American fast food and always makes rounds to her favorite drive-thrus when visiting the States.

The students posed many questions about her work before her peacebuilding career, such as what it was like to win an Oscar for her journalism work and her advice for succeeding as a woman in a male-dominated work environment. On the topic of peacebuilding, Rasul emphasized the importance of helping people come together through their similarities. Utilizing an example of a Palestinian and an Israeli who bonded over their similar familial pressure to wed, she shared that once people recognize they have basic human experiences in common, they can more easily listen to the other's perspective. Rasul laid out a large-scale view of the complexities associated with the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and admitted that there is no simple solution to solve such deep-rooted conflicts. However, for her, peacebuilding can bring hope by assisting people in coming together to dialogue and work together, celebrating their similarities, not their spite.

Spotlight on a Remarkable Peacebuilder: Alissa S. Wilson

By Jiezhong Chang, Monica Dominguez, and Allison Hemingway

Since the beginning of the semester at Purdue University, the Purdue Peace Project (PPP) has been working closely with students in the first-year undergraduate research seminar at Purdue University, Peacebuilding and Communication, taught by Dr. Stacey Connaughton, PPP Director. Recently, these students had the opportunity to network with various professionals connected with PPP and in the peacebuilding industry. One of these individuals, Alissa S. Wilson, offered the class a unique insight into her work at the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC). As the Public Education and Advocacy Coordinator for Africa for AFSC, Alissa works with the Washington DC policy community and the Quaker United Nations Office to “bring together the lessons that AFSC has learned from their work and connect them to the DC policy community.” In previous years, she has worked on projects in various countries such as Burundi, Somalia, and Kenya, focusing on conflict resolution through social reconciliation and community rights.

We were really curious about what a professional peacebuilder’s workday was like, so we asked Wilson about her normal day schedule. Since she needs to connect to a lot of her colleagues in Africa, she is constantly dealing with time zone differences and connectivity issues. She said she must check emails during the night and early mornings, and her meetings, usually held through the Internet, must be scheduled at really odd hours of the night. She also said that licensing for education and remaining up to date with U.S. regulations is a big part of her everyday work. Getting a license to teach about peacebuilding related work takes a lot of time and hard work because U.S. law makes it a time consuming process.

Wilson was helpful throughout the entire class, smiling even through the inevitable technological difficulties. She was ready to share her thoughts with the class regarding her work with AFSC, the book that she co-authored [Changing the World and Getting Paid] and the issues that arise from being a female in a male-dominated fields of work (here she was speaking about her professional experience prior to AFSC). When asked how much gender roles influenced her work in peacebuilding, she stated that almost everyone she worked with was male. She also had a heartwarming anecdote to share in which she discussed the gender roles prevalent in her peacebuilding work, focusing on what she does when she spends her time in Africa. In it, she shared how a woman’s infant child unexpectedly joined the pair in a helicopter ride. She said that sometimes there are necessary steps that you must take in order to accommodate women in peacebuilding, but these steps are never overdone and always worthwhile.

Alissa S. Walters was a delight to speak with and a joy to be able to learn from as young adults beginning our journey in peacebuilding.



**American Friends
Service Committee**

Creating Peace One Screen at a Time

By Maggie Gonzalez, Austin Miller, Ceira Ostberg, and Liz Walker

Robbed. Beaten. Ribs broken. Held at gunpoint. A hostage. A victim.

Trevor Wallace, peacebuilder and filmmaker, experienced these things the first time he traveled out of the country as a young man. In these moments, everything Wallace knew about life changed drastically. Wallace stated that “real life experience exposed me to something different. I didn’t want to run away from realities I could face in the world... I want to tell the dark human stories of the world.”

And tell these stories he has! Wallace has collaborated with countless companies, traveling all over the world, working toward social and environmental justice. The Peacebuilding and Communication class at Purdue University, taught by Purdue Peace Project Director, Dr. Stacey Connaughton, was honored to have Wallace speak about his life as a filmmaker and peacebuilder and his work overseas. He shared with the class the different rewards and struggles of doing peacebuilding through film, as well as the details of his last project in El Salvador.



Wallace’s films bring awareness to issues that people from the developed world often overlook or fail to hear about. These films motivate his audience to spread their awareness and to try to make a difference. Local people often feel empowered due to Wallace’s work. In Nepal, after showing his short film to a large company that was going to redirect a river and leave villages without water, thereby killing their crops and way of life, the company became more aware of the situation they were putting Nepal’s people in. The company has not pulled out of their plans; however, they have since stalled shifting the lake.

Wallace broadens the reach of his work by bringing video into the classroom. When he taught over 500 students in Spanish with Teach for America after college, Wallace discovered the power film making can have on the lives of students. He encouraged his students to document their families’ histories through their parents and grandparents, with the majority being of Central American descendants. He believes it is important to connect with people even before the camera is brought in. For example, in Senegal, he spent 2 weeks with a local artist and most of the time, Wallace did not bring his camera. In these weeks, he learned how to make sculptures while building a friendship, before he even began thinking about the documentary. Helping his students reflect on these kinds of experiences allows them to make even closer connections to family and gives them a glimpse into how they can make a difference in their communities.

One issue that Wallace is committed to is women’s empowerment in peacebuilding and beyond. For example, in a recent project with a women’s health start-up he saw firsthand that when women are empowered in a community, the children get better education and families get better access to healthcare. In his work, Wallace explores different opportunities for all persons, including women, to make change in their lives through the power of communication and media.

Trevor Wallace displays a remarkable passion for international human liberation through social and environmental justice. In a world relentlessly plagued by poverty and conflict, Wallace strives to highlight and investigate the barriers to progress that lie before humanity so as to move all of us forward, together. His work demonstrates the effectiveness of film as an educational medium and a medium which inspires action. From El Salvador to Senegal, his journeys into stories of injustice and oppression breathe hope and courage into the hearts of the those fighting for egalitarianism worldwide. Wallace has shown us not only how to become better peacebuilders, but also tougher dissenters, more supportive citizens, and kinder neighbors.

Feature on a Local Peacebuilder: Mr. Amos Paypay, Liberia National Police Commander

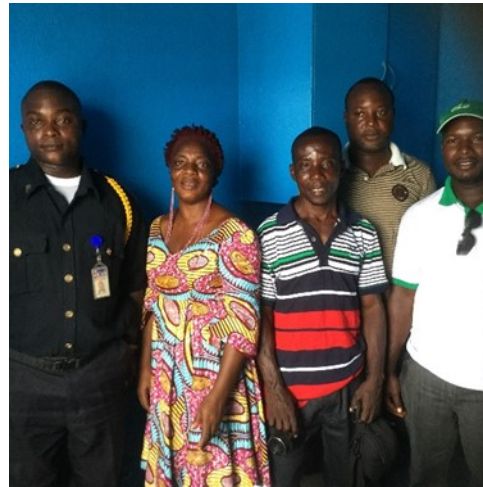


Mr. Amos Paypay is a Commander with the Liberia National Police (LNP) in Monrovia, Liberia, and a member of the Pen-Pen Peace Network (PPPN). The PPPN is a local peace committee formed after a meeting which the Purdue Peace Project convened in 2013 to help prevent violence and enhance relationships among pen-pen riders and others in Liberia. The PPPN has evolved and is now working with the National Election Commission and other groups to help ensure that the 2017 elections in Liberia are peaceful. After thirty years of experience in law enforcement, Paypay says it is important that the LNP collaborates with NGOs and community members to introduce the best practices when it comes to preparing for a peaceful election season in 2017. For this reason he is proud of the PPPN's efforts to offer promote and work toward peaceful elections. Paypay admits that these opportunities unite pen-pen riders (motorcyclists) and the LNP to work hand in hand, making "it possible to have successful interactions on a daily basis." From his perspective, peace is "not just an event, it's a process", which means all institutions, schools, communities, and civil society need to participate in sharing the message of peace. Paypay says, "peace means democratic practice - you must understand democratic bodies. They are the root." He believes the LNP has been "striving and working toward the understanding of democratic practice" to "ensure to bring everybody on board to see peaceful elections come 2017."

Mr. Amos Paypay,
Zone 3 Commander,
Liberian National Police



Promoting Peaceful 2017 Elections in Liberia



The first few months of 2016 proved to be extremely active for the Pen-Pen Peace Network in Monrovia, Liberia, as they embarked on a campaign to promote peaceful presidential elections, slated for October 2017. This peaceful elections project developed by the PPPN, a local peace committee which the Purdue Peace Project helped to initiate, has two goals: (1) to bridge election tension and prevent electoral violence in Liberia and (2) to strengthen relationships between the pen-pen riders and the Liberian National Police.

PPP team members visited Liberia in February and March 2016 to be a part of the PPPN's Confidence Building Week (CBW). The CBW saw participation from pen-pen riders, community members, and police officials in Monrovia, and sought to promote better relations among the various actors. The CBW in the Old Road community held in February kicked off with a Town Hall Meeting, where community members, pen-pen riders, and police officials

discussed the importance of peace. The Town Hall Meeting was followed by three days of games between pen-pen riders and community members.

In March, PPPN members which include members of the Liberian National Police, pen-pen riders, market women, the Ministry of Transport, and the National Elections Commission, came together again to plan the expansion of their work to other communities and to involve the political parties in ensuring that codes of conduct for peaceful elections are upheld. The PPPN's work is designed and implemented by the members themselves and supported by the Purdue Peace Project. Efforts are underway to assess the effectiveness of these strategies in meeting their intended goals.



Research Assistant Spotlight

Arunima joined the Purdue Peace Project in Spring 2014, when she became actively involved in projects in Ghana. Arunima has traveled multiple times to Ghana to engage in data collection and peacebuilding work in PPP's projects throughout the country. She is currently in her final year of her doctoral program in Public Relations at the Brian Lamb School of Communication, where she also earned her Master's degree. Informed by her professional experience in marketing, Arunima's research examines public behavior, and more specifically, publics' communicative actions and the consequences of such behaviors on organizations and other publics. She has received several honors and awards, including the Alan H. Monroe Scholar Award, the Inez Kaiser Award, and a highly competitive Purdue Research Foundation fellowship to support her dissertation work. Arunima has co-authored several academic papers about PPP's work, two of which have received top paper honors. She has been instrumental in introducing PPP's locally driven peacebuilding approach to Public Relations scholars. Arunima is currently working with Drs. Stacey Connaughton and Torsten Reimer on a meta-analysis, the first phase of an initiative that seeks to build a predictive model of the likelihood of political violence prior to, during, and after a (locally driven) peacebuilding initiative such as PPP. With Dr. Connaughton, Arunima will also be mentoring a Purdue student on her undergraduate Honors Thesis which will examine the relationship between public relations and peacebuilding. Arunima recently accepted a tenure-track faculty position at Boston University and will begin her role there in July 2016.



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