

PEACE AND JUSTICE INSTITUTE

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ALL PEOPLE. ALL VOICES. ALL MATTER.

No Justice, No Peace



Since the 1980s, “No Justice, No Peace” has been the main slogan shouted by those marching against injustice across America. These marches have reignited in 2020 due to the killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and others. People have been outraged and are taking their grievances to the streets.

While rage and anger are sometimes a block to understanding and resolution, the Peace and Justice Institute at Valencia College creates spaces where charged emotions can be transformed into constructive

dialogue. PJI has been a recognized institution in Central Florida and the United States because of our vision: “All People. All Voices. All Matter.”

The work of PJI has certainly increased during these uncertain times, creating safe spaces for dialogue between opposing thoughts. PJI Circles were developed to give faculty, staff, students, and community members opportunities to express their hopes and fears and build resilience during these uncertain times. Workshops and events have been moved to a virtual platform, such as the PJI Academy for Teachers and the PJI YOUth Academy, in order to continue advancing our mission.

It pleases me to take a moment to thank the outstanding PJI staff and volunteers as well as the committed Advisory Council who all have helped guide the Institute forward while working remotely and continuing this critical work.

Equal justice, individual dignity, and equal opportunity are within our grasp. All we need to do is listen carefully and work together to find solutions and make our community a better place for all.

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We are living in unprecedented times which call for each of us to grow our inner resources and resilience. Nurturing these strengths may seem daunting in light of the health, social, and economic crisis our world is facing. Our humanity is being disrupted and tested. How will we adapt?

The Commitments of a Peace and Justice Practitioner remind us to engage in the exploration of the “other” with an acknowledgment of our inherent interdependence, and to recognize that there can be no peace without justice for all. COVID-19 lays bare the reality of our interconnectedness and calls us to our best selves - willing to sacrifice for the common good. A disease that ravages the elderly and communities of color disproportionately invites us to consider in all of our actions, “How can I be a part of the solution?”

In addition to the COVID-19 pandemic, incidences of racial terror, including the lynching of George Floyd, galvanize us to demand racial justice. As Dr. Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. stated, “I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be, and you can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be...” As more and more people open their eyes to the racial injustice that cripples our nation, we are, each one of us, called to examine our part in a system that denies our dream of “E Pluribus Unum,” a unified nation of diverse people.

This moment in human history is calling us to our higher selves. It is an opportunity to sacrifice for the good of the whole, develop relationships of mutual support, grow in our adaptability, creativity, emotional intelligence, conflict navigation skills, and more. It is a time to develop our inner resources so as to strengthen personal and collective resilience.

Although we may feel we are “falling behind,” in truth, this moment provides humanity a chance to “fall forward” into what are the essential human skills – empathy, compassion, service, self-sacrifice and love of neighbor. Each day, each one of us, amidst so much suffering, is called to our better selves, to build human community among us.

Americans who grew up during the Great Depression and fought in World War II, or whose labor helped win it are referred to as the Greatest Generation. Their greatness came from service and sacrifice for the common good. In Victor Frankl’s classic book, *Man’s Search for Meaning*, written while imprisoned in a Nazi concentration camp he states, “Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms - to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one’s own way.”

Our current world situation mirrors war experiences, given the depth of suffering and the call for sacrifice. We, too, are being given an opportunity for greatness, to choose our attitude – our way. At PJI, we aim to support individuals and groups to develop inner resources to face the outer challenges and struggles for peace and justice that lie ahead.

Thank you for joining us.

Rachel C. Allen
Peace and Justice Institute, Director

PRINCIPLES FOR HOW WE TREAT EACH OTHER

Our Practice of Respect and Community Building



Create a hospitable and accountable community.

We all arrive in isolation and need the generosity of friendly welcomes. Bring all of yourself to the work in this community. Welcome others to this place and this work, and presume that you are welcomed as well. Hospitality is the essence of restoring community.



Practice asking honest and open questions.

A great question is ambiguous, personal and provokes anxiety.



When things get difficult, turn to wonder.

If you find yourself disagreeing with another, becoming judgmental, or shutting down in defense, try turning to wonder: "I wonder what brought her to this place?" "I wonder what my reaction teaches me?" "I wonder what he's feeling right now?"



All voices have value.

Hold these moments when a person speaks as precious because these are the moments when a person is willing to stand for something, trust the group and offer something they see as valuable.



Suspend judgment.

Set aside your judgments. By creating a space between judgments and reactions, we can listen to the other, and to ourselves, more fully.



Create an advice free zone.

Replace advice with curiosity as we work together for peace and justice. Each of us is here to discover our own truths. We are not here to set someone else straight, to "fix" what we perceive as broken in another member of the group.



Speak your truth.

You are invited to say what is in your heart, trusting that your voice will be heard and your contribution respected. Own your truth by remembering to speak only for yourself. Using the first person "I" rather than "you" or "everyone" clearly communicates the personal nature of your expression.



Practice slowing down.

Simply the speed of modern life can cause violent damage to the soul. By intentionally practicing slowing down we strengthen our ability to extend peace to others—and to ourselves.



Listen deeply.

Listen intently to what is said; listen to the feelings beneath the words. Strive to achieve a balance between listening and reflecting, speaking and acting.



Respect silence.

Silence is a rare gift in our busy world. After someone has spoken, take time to reflect without immediately filling the space with words. This applies to the speaker, as well—be comfortable leaving your words to resound in the silence, without refining or elaborating on what you have said.



Identify assumptions.

Our assumptions are usually invisible to us, yet they undergird our worldview. By identifying our assumptions, we can then set them aside and open our viewpoints to greater possibilities.



Give space for unpopular answers.

Answer questions honestly even if the answer seems unpopular. Be present to listen not debate, correct or interpret.



Maintain confidentiality.

Create a safe space by respecting the confidential nature and content of discussions held in the group. Allow what is said in the group to remain there.

Skin on the Rope

By Valada Flewellyn

We all have skin on the rope
Whether a neck on the rope
Or a hand on the rope
We all have skin on the rope
The pain of that connection
Grips us, entangles us
Compels us to examine
Our history, then construct
Tomorrow to manifest the
Wounds that need
More than a band-aid
Wounds that warrant more
Than a cursory examination
We must dissect the
Fibers of our history
Inspect our suspect
Moral Consciousness
Which allows sin to fester
As we turn our heads
Away from the atrocities
That grab our children
Drowning them in the muck
Of our making
Leaving them unprepared
Unprotected but infected
Generation after generation
From our refusal to acknowledge
How we have Failed
Our children...All

We ALL have skin on the rope.

*Listen to this poem at
www.ocoemassacre.com*



ABLEISM & LANGUAGE 101

An interview with Deborah Larew, Director of the Office for Students with Disabilities at Valencia College

By Deborah Larew, Britney Pierce, and LaTasha Thomas

How would you define ableism?

Merriam Webster Dictionary defines Ableism as the “discrimination or prejudice against individuals with disabilities.” However, Ableism is not as outright as the denial of services to someone with physical disabilities, such as a person in a wheelchair. It goes a lot deeper than that. It is a feeling of superiority that somehow a person with disabilities is lesser than someone who is temporarily able bodied. A person with a disability is no less able than anyone else.

What are some common misconceptions about people with disabilities?

A lot of times people are unsure how to interact with a person with disabilities out of fear that they will be unintentionally offensive. A person with a disability should not be treated as a lesser human. Your conversations with a person with disabilities should not have the tone of pity and sympathy. People with disabilities live fulfilling and happy lives. It is offensive to automatically assume otherwise.

In the Valencia student population, are there a large number of students with disabilities?

What about the number of students who are undiagnosed or undisclosed?

Within the Office of Students with Disabilities collegewide, we serve over 1,500 students. Understand of course that a student is not required to register

with us. They only need to register if they need accommodations. So for example, because our campus is accessible, a student who uses a wheelchair may choose not to register with us. Also, often times students choose not to disclose a disability because they fear stigmatization. It is our job as Professors, and the community as a whole, to educate ourselves so we can actively confront this stigma.

What are disabilities that students face that we might not think about?

When I started working in the Disability Services field many years ago, the most prevalent disability category represented was that of learning disabilities, like dyslexia and ADHD. However our largest population represented now is that of mental illnesses such as anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder, etc.

Can you share some examples of how to interact with someone who has a physical disability?

I will tell you a story about a friend of mine who uses a wheelchair. She scheduled some time for us to get together and chat. The room I was in was crowded, and when she showed up I rushed to clear a path. I said, “I’m so sorry! I forgot you used a chair!” She laughed and said that was the nicest thing anyone ever said to her!

I think that the best way to interact with someone who has an obvious disability is to acknowledge it and ask them how you can best assist them.

“When applicable, it is best to say ‘person with a disability’ instead of ‘disabled person.’ This shift in language reminds us to acknowledge the person before their disability.”

I once had a friend ask for advice regarding a woman who worked with him and she was deaf. He told me some of his clients thought she was rude because she didn't immediately respond to them if her back was turned. I asked him if he talked to her about it. He said “No; is that okay to do?” I told him “She knows she's deaf! Ask her how you two might address the problem.” Together they worked on a solution.

How can we support people with disabilities? How can organizations be more inclusive of people with disabilities?

An important thing to remember, something that you may have noticed while reading this Q&A, is that there is a preferred language when speaking about a person with a disability. When applicable, it is best to say ‘person with a disability’ instead of ‘disabled person.’ This shift in language reminds us to acknowledge the person before their disability. Also, don't be afraid to look someone in the eye and ask if they need help, but be sure to give them space to accept or deny the offer.

If you see someone with a disability that you do not know doing a mundane task like opening a door or cooking, it is not appropriate to celebrate this as an achievement, because you have no basis for what an achievement is for a stranger. If a dyslexic person can read a book quicker than you, they should not serve as personal inspiration to up your own reading goals. People with disabilities should not be used as examples or encouragement for temporarily able bodied people as it is dehumanizing and equates someone's disability as the sole embodiment of who they are.

As for organizations, I would recommend planning for accessibility in all you do. If you have an event being advertised, place the contact information for disability access on the advertisement. Plan to hire interpreters if requested or to assist with other access. Always caption videos; this is helpful not only to people with hearing loss. Following the Universal Design for Learning Guidelines (a set of recommendations to reduce visual barriers and to maximize learning by altering text, fonts, and background colors) is another great tool to improve accessibility.

Book Suggestions?

One of my favorite authors is Oliver Sacks! He is a neurologist who writes about the brilliance of the brain and how it adapts to disability. In his book, *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat*, he reveals mysteries of the mind and tells real life stories that help one understand the experience of someone with these conditions. The other book I love is, *Seeing Voices*; in this book Sacks describes the experience of being deaf.

EVENTS

SPRING/SUMMER 2020

IN REVIEW



January 14, 2020

Intersectionality: A Framework For Social Change

Valencia College East Campus
Participants came together for a workshop facilitated by QLatinx to embark on an understanding of the multiple identities we embody, in an effort to better understand the positions of privilege and power that are held by others and ourselves, and actively work to address equity and achieve liberation.

January 27 - 30, 2020

Conversation on Justice

Valencia Campus Collegewide
Covering many of today's hot button issues - ranging from #MeToo, gun violence, immigration, economic inequality, sexual orientation, the environment and racial inequity - each event, through the power of transformative stories, facilitated discussions, award-winning films, art projects, and more, delved into critical conversations with the ultimate goal of promoting a culture of peace and mending the fabric of our humanity.

January 30, 2020

Black History Celebration Breakfast

Valencia College East Campus
Valencia students as well as faculty, staff, and the community came together and shared the first meal of the day with prominent local African American leaders. They positively engaged in conversations about their challenges, successes, and guiding philosophies.

February 14, 2020

Valencia Night at the Hindu Society of Central Florida

Casselberry, FL
Valencia students, faculty, staff, and the community joined PJI for a tour of the Hindu Temple, a free vegetarian dinner, and presentations on a variety of Hindu traditions including yoga and meditation.

February 21 - 22, 2020

Faculty and Staff Peace and Justice Spring Retreat

Venue on the Lake, Maitland, FL
This unique opportunity provided a time for Valencia College colleagues to reflect on their lives in a meaningful and uplifting way. The retreat focused on wholehearted living, the subject of Brené Brown's book *The Gift of Imperfection*.

April 21, 2020

2nd Annual Creating a Resilient Community: From Trauma to Healing Conference

Real Time Virtual via ZOOM
The conference hosted cutting-edge keynote speakers and convened participants representing multiple community sectors including Health, Education, Business, Public Safety, Government, Criminal Justice, Faith, Child Welfare, and Non-Profit. This community initiative provides a space to discuss the impact of trauma, ways of healing, and how Central Florida can build a resilient community.

Recurring

#Votes4All: The Power to Create a More Perfect Democracy

Multiple locations

Inspired by the role of voting in the Ocoee Massacre, join us for workshops designed to illuminate the history of voter suppression in Central Florida as it relates to gender and race. On the centennial of women's suffrage and the massacre in Ocoee, we aim to acknowledge our difficult history and move toward reconciliation. #Votes4All believes that the power to create a more perfect democracy lies in the power of the truth and, as ever, in the power of the people. Please join us at one (or multiple) of our workshops taking place across Central Florida this Fall where we will engage with one another on matters of gender, race, and the ballot.

Recurring

PJI Circles

Real time virtual via ZOOM

In response to COVID-19 and the multiple incidences of racial terror, PJI has provided a virtual space on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays for people to connect through a metaphoric "circle" for building resilience within and among us during these trying times. Each one of us has a story to tell about how we are walking through these challenging days, so this virtual circle allows individuals to share their story. These safe spaces are created to remove blaming and shaming and to welcome honest, open sharing of our personal experiences, struggles, and triumphs.

Session 1: June 21 - 26 | Session 2: July 12 - 17, 2020

PJI Academy for Teachers

Real time virtual via ZOOM

The PJI Academy for Teachers hosted educators from Pre-K to higher education for a transformative experience, with the goal of creating more inclusive, respectful, and loving classrooms and citizens.

August 2 - 7, 2020

PJI YOUth Academy

Real time virtual via ZOOM

This week-long community building experience hosted youth between 9th-12th grade, with a mission to help them discover their voice and become much needed advocates in peace and justice. Participants in the program gained a deeper and more personal understanding of PJI Principles that allow them to engage others in order to take a more active role in communities and grow into active participants of society, while developing life-long skills in leadership and personal growth.

A Transformative Experience:

One Teacher's Testimony

By Dr. Alecia Blackwood



When I first started teaching in one of Florida's urban public schools, I almost quit because it was challenging for me to support the diverse students' social and emotional needs while teaching them the academic content. I felt like my teacher preparation program did not equip me with the skills to teach culturally diverse students. The students were disrespectful and disorderly, and I was being pressured by the principal to rectify the situation. The principal criticized my lack of management skills, but she did not offer any practical help. I was left to figure it out on my own. During a random classroom walkthrough, the principal explicitly told me that I needed to "get my act together" in two weeks. I was unable to "get my act together," so the principal removed me from the classroom. I was devastated! I felt like my dreams to become a good teacher were falling apart. Yes, this was my story 16 years ago!

In the early 2000s, I relocated from New York City to escape the traumatic experiences of 9/11; however, reflecting, I unknowingly brought my traumatic experiences and transferred those experiences in my teaching practices. My experiences were wrapped up in who I was as an educator. It was not until the following year that my teaching skills began to improve because I attended a workshop on culturally responsive teaching and became more self-aware.

To further understand my journey as an educator, I decided to do a self-study during my seventh year of teaching. The goal of the self-study was to better understand what the observers were witnessing in my teaching practices. For example, some of my colleagues

would refer to my classroom as the "zen classroom." Many university professors were impressed with my teaching techniques when they visited my class. For example, a research professor in South Africa observed me teaching one day and said, "you teach in the spirit of Ubuntu." Unaware of Ubuntu's meaning at that time, I went on a quest to understand Ubuntu's philosophical concept and how it had a positive impact on the classroom environment.

The self-study focused on how culturally responsive teaching strategies impact students' learning. Gay (2010) defined "culturally responsive teaching as using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them" (p.31). Although I was intentional about using culturally responsive strategies in my class, the observers saw something unique and different in my actions and my students. For example, the students in my 3rd grade classroom were respectful, compassionate, and had a strong sense of community. They were caring, peaceful, and hospitable to each other. A self-study analysis confirmed that as the facilitator of learning, the shifts happened in my practice when I became more culturally competent. Cultural competence is "the ability to extend oneself, form authentic relationships and understand, communicate, and effectively interact with diverse others" (Ukpokodu, 2016, p.43).

As an educator, I created a safe environment where students were validated, affirmed, and dignified as human beings. I acknowledged the

To fully understand the "connectedness of the heart," it is incumbent upon us to first understand ourselves and build authentic relationships with others in the spaces that we share. As educators, this is what we are called upon to do in the business of teaching and learning.

humanity in each of them. Ukpokodu (2016) posited when we validate others' humanity, we, in essence, validate our own humanity. For instance, I taught the students the importance of not devaluing and dehumanizing each other. They learned about the importance of tolerance and respect in the morning meetings. Morning meeting is a structured part of our day when students learn how to build a strong classroom community. In the morning meetings, we talk about Ubuntu. In its simplest meaning, Ubuntu is an African concept from the Bantu languages in Southern Africa, which loosely means "Humanness." Ubuntu is an all-inclusive worldview that considers values shared across cultures and encompasses the concepts of care, compassion, empathy, honesty, hospitality, respect, and tolerance (Biraimah, 2016; Letseka, 2012). Archbishop Desmond Tutu succinctly explained it when he posited that a person with Ubuntu

feels diminished when others are humiliated, oppressed, and treated as less than their human worth. In the African cosmology, “Ubuntu means I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am” (Ukpokodu, 2016, p.106). This shows that as humans, we are interconnected, and what we do has a direct impact on others. Through the knowledge of Ubuntu, I had a deeper understanding of self, and I created learning spaces in which “community of truth” is practiced and where both the students and I were able to express what Parker Palmer refers to as the “capacity for the connectedness of the heart” (Palmer, 1998, p.92). To fully understand the “connectedness of the heart,” it is incumbent upon us to first understand ourselves and build authentic relationships with others in the spaces that we share. As educators, this is what we are called upon to do in the business of teaching and learning.

The Peace and Justice Institute at Valencia College has designed and implemented a unique program that teaches educators how to transform their lived experiences to become more culturally competent, the PJI Academy for Teachers (PJIAT). PJI has revolutionized how to apply sociocultural theories by presenting a comprehensive approach that will help educators transform their practice. The PJIAT workshops are grounded in the belief that all students are humans that can excel in their academics if their humanity is placed front and center in their learning. Evident in PJIAT’s conceptual framework are sociocultural theories, including Ubuntu pedagogy and Mezirow’s transformative learning theory.

Ubuntu pedagogy is a transformative framework that uses a humanizing approach to help engage the students by putting their

Transformative learning theory is a learning process that transforms problematic frames of reference to make them more inclusive, discerning, reflective, open, and emotionally able to change.

humanity at the forefront before teaching academic content. A significant part of Ubuntu pedagogy is that teachers must be self-aware, examine personal biases, build authentic relationships with students, and strengthen communication and collaboration (Blackwood, 2018; Ukpokodu, 2016). Transformative learning theory is a learning process that transforms problematic frames of reference to make them more inclusive, discerning, reflective, open, and emotionally able to change (Mezirow, 2000). Throughout the workshop, participants were engaged in critical reflection and discourse. Mezirow (2000) explains that when people are involved in this type of critical reflection process and discourse, it leads to the transformation of habits of mind, heart, and action.

At the weeklong summer program, participants learned about the PJI principles, explored their own identity, hidden bias, and unpacked life experiences to discover their impact on the delivery of schools’ curriculum. Throughout the program, they also learned the importance of understanding self, building authentic relationships with students, and how to use trauma-informed approaches to build a strong community and connection.

Furthermore, the readings, written reflections, experiential activities, and dialogue contributed to the educator’s transformative experiences. Research has shown that a significant number of teachers who participated in PJIAT reported that the experience transformed their teaching practice and expanded their frames of reference (Sanguilano & Mack, 2020).

It was evident from my experience that a systematic inquiry-based process guided the overall design of the program. The workshop’s facilitators were intentional with planning, questioning, and guiding the participants through critical reflection. Pre-service and in-service teachers can benefit from the pedagogical tools and theoretical frameworks that PJI introduces to help them create learning spaces that humanize all learners.

Alecia Blackwood has a doctoral degree in education from the University of Central Florida. She was a recipient of the 2017 Fullbright-Hays Scholar award for Namibia and Botswana. She is an active community leader, an instructional coach at a charter school, and an adjunct professor of the New Student Experience at Valencia College.

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Building Interfaith Bridges

By Josh Bell



When Dr. Eboo Patel met with His Holiness, the Dalai Lama, His Holiness said, “Religions must dialogue ... and find common values.... And as you study the other religions, you must learn more about your own and believe more in your own.”¹

The values expressed by His Holiness reflect the bridges of interfaith understanding and cooperation

“Interfaith bridges are built by one person listening to another person and being changed by the gift of their story.”

that the Peace and Justice Institute seeks to build and strengthen. To build these bridges, PJI creates spaces where people from different belief and thought backgrounds can come together and learn from one another. During normal years, we host our annual Peace Breakfast at Valencia’s East Campus coordinated by Professor Nicole Valentino. We also organize Valencia Nights hosted by different belief and thought communities coordinated by Professor Paul Chapman at the Winter Park Campus. This year’s opportunities included Guang Ming Buddhist

Temple, Mt. Moriah Missionary Baptist Church, the Hindu Society of Central Florida, and the Islamic Society of Central Florida.

The most effective method for building bridges of understanding between people of different faith or thought backgrounds is not complicated. You do not have to know the Dalai Lama. It does not require an advanced degree in comparative religion. You do not have to speak more than one language or know the intricacies of another person’s theology. The first step in building bridges is simply to meet a person of a different background than your own and to see them as a person of worth and dignity.

The next step is to ask permission to hear some of their story. By that, I do not mean the narrative of their sacred text(s). I mean the story of who that person is and how he/she/they interact with their particular system of belief or thought. One of the greatest tools for building interfaith bridges is to recognize that every participant in a particular belief or thought community lives out his/her/their experience in unique ways. No community is monolithic.

No stereotype or generalization accurately depicts each person within a community.

When someone shares their story of how their life is impacted by their faith or philosophy, you are receiving the gift of their perspective and experience. You are being given the gift of a small glimpse into their identity. When you receive that gift with gentleness and gratitude, you enter into greater understanding of the other person. You also have the opportunity to understand your own beliefs in light of what they have shared with you. This reciprocal process of listening and seeking to understand helps to create the basis of all interfaith work: a respectful and compassionate relationship between two people.

Building bridges of interfaith understanding is more important than ever in an increasingly sectarian world. We can feel immense pressure and anxiety around such encounters. However, interfaith bridges are built by one person listening to another person and being changed by the gift of their story.

Rev. Josh Bell is the Interfaith Coordinator for the Peace and Justice Institute. He also serves as the Director of Community Development for the Community Hope Center in Kissimmee.

We invite you to join us for our annual Peace Breakfast: An Interfaith Gathering which will be held this year virtually via zoom on November 18th. Register at:

bit.ly/PeaceBreakfast2020

¹ Patel, E. (2007). Acts of faith: The story of an American Muslim, the struggle for the soul of a generation. Beacon Press.

peace

BREAKFAST

AN INTERFAITH GATHERING



November 18, 2020
9:00-10:15 AM

Register at

<https://bit.ly/PeaceBreakfast2020>
to receive the Zoom link for this virtual breakfast.

Join a diverse group of faith and worldview leaders for a discussion on the historic and changing roles women play in religious and thought traditions.

Questions? Contact
peaceandjustice@valenciacollege.edu
or call 407-582-2291

PEACE AND
JUSTICE INSTITUTE
All People. All Voices. All Matter.

VALENCIA COLLEGE

FACES of ISLAM

By Sofiya Asedrem, Aminah Hamidullah,
& Fatima Sadaf Saied

“The best of you are those who are best to their women,” is a famous saying of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him. He advocated for the rights and dignity of women. Following the example of their prophet and teaching of their faith, Muslim women have been at the forefront of important change and activism in our communities.

In this article we will be highlighting the journeys of three Muslim women from diverse backgrounds, demonstrating how Islam helped them to navigate societal challenges and become the best version of themselves.

Muslims have been part of the American social fabric for centuries. The mainstream historical narrative fails to highlight that 10 - 15 % of Africans brought to the US in the slave trade were Muslim. In the late seventeenth century Muslim immigrants from the Middle East began to arrive, and a new wave of Muslim immigrants has come in the last several decades. Muslims make up 1.5% of the total US population and a quarter of the Muslims in America today are converts. American Muslims are diverse, as is echoed here by the stories of Sofiya, Fatima, and Aminah.

Aminah and Sofiya both grew up in Christian homes. Aminah, whose family was rooted in strong Christian values and faith, converted to Islam in her college years. Sofiya whose father is a Muslim immigrant from Morocco and mother a Catholic American from a small town in Pennsylvania, chose Islam as her guiding faith. By contrast, Fatima is a first generation American, her mother arriving in South Florida from Karachi, Pakistan as a newlywed, leaving everything and everyone she knew behind. Aminah, Fatima, and Sofiya all found themselves, in different ways, surrounded by people that looked, talked, or believed differently than themselves.

Aminah could never understand why the answers to her basic questions about religion were leaving her feeling confused and perplexed. When she left home for college, she started to search for answers, and upon discovery of Islam, she found the answers she was looking for. Aminah, who identifies as an African American Muslim woman still encountered behaviors

of believers that did not always match the teachings of her new faith. She constantly sought the wisdom of the Quran, and found the worship of one God, the status of women in Islam, and its position on race satisfying.

Sofiya spent her teenage years living a double life - struggling to define her identity and trying to fit in. At her mom's she straightened her hair and tried to highlight her “white traits,” while at her father's house she wore the hijab and hid when encountering her white friends who she thought might judge her faith. In high school, Sofiya decided to follow her inner conviction and truly commit to the Islamic faith. She always felt that Islam offered her a middle ground



between the cultures of the east and west. Islam helped her to identify priorities in life, through its emphasis on a duty to seek knowledge and to achieve peace internally, in order to better serve the community.

Fatima, on the other hand, whose parents feared losing their culture and faith, surrounded her by the welcoming community of South Florida Muslims they had helped build. She grew up with leadership roles in her mosque's youth group. When she entered college, however, she found herself face-to-face with and having to stand up against a less pluralistic group of Muslims. Since then she has been finding ways to build brave and safe spaces for Muslim women.

Feeling empowered by the verse, “The believing men and believing women are allies of one another. They enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and establish prayer and give charity...” (Quran 9:71), Sofiya, Aminah, and Fatima have challenged negative trends they witness in the community. Each has felt a responsibility of “enjoining in what is right,” while standing up against what is wrong, and helping the less fortunate.

These three women are following in the footsteps of the historic figure of Aisha from the Islamic tradition, who passed down over 2000 hadith (sayings of the prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him) and who is known for her scholarship and confidence while spreading the truth, even when it meant she had to

stand up to men who disagreed with her. They are collectively inspired to take on a similar responsibility of standing up for justice. For instance, Aminah left corporate America to start a non-profit, Knowledge for Living, Inc. for the purpose of uplifting people through education in the hopes that they would have a better life. Fatima, through her Muslim Women's Organization, nurtures welcoming spaces that honor women and provide them the resources they need to make an impact in the community. Sofiya advocates for the oppressed in the developing world through her academic work at the university, and for local causes through her role at the Peace and Justice Institute.

Each of them are making a difference by working in their own unique ways. In a world of so much hard power, each of these women, with wisdom and grace, is making a difference by modeling mercy in the face of hatred and compassion working for the oppressed and less fortunate. These are the faces of Islam.

Sofiya Asedrem is a graduate of The George Washington University where she completed her undergraduate degree Magna Cum Laude in International Affairs with a concentration in International Development. She is currently a master's degree candidate in Political Science at UCF, and works at the Peace and Justice Institute at Valencia College.

Aminah Hamidullah is Director and Co-founder of Knowledge for Living, Inc. which provides educational and training programs that empower at risk youth, women and families to develop skills to bring them closer to economic self-sufficiency. Aminah is an avid cook and the co-owner of Foodies Cafe in Downtown Orlando.

Fatima Sadaf Saied is the Executive Director of the Muslim Women's Organization, dedicated to advancing gender equity and empowering the community by harnessing the leadership of Muslim women. She is a breast cancer survivor that is passionate about uplifting the lives of her daughters, team members, and community through compassion and love.

The Peace and Justice Institute
celebrates the 20th Anniversary of

United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325

A Landmark Resolution on
Women, Peace, and Security

Passed in 2000, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) formally acknowledged the realities of modern warfare, including the increased targeting of civilians and the exclusion of women from participation in peace processes.

The resolution addresses the differentiated impact of conflict on women and girls and emphasizes the critical role of women in peacebuilding efforts.

UNSCR 1325 affirms that peace and security efforts are more sustainable when women are equal partners in the prevention of violent conflict, the delivery of relief and recovery efforts and in the forging of lasting peace.

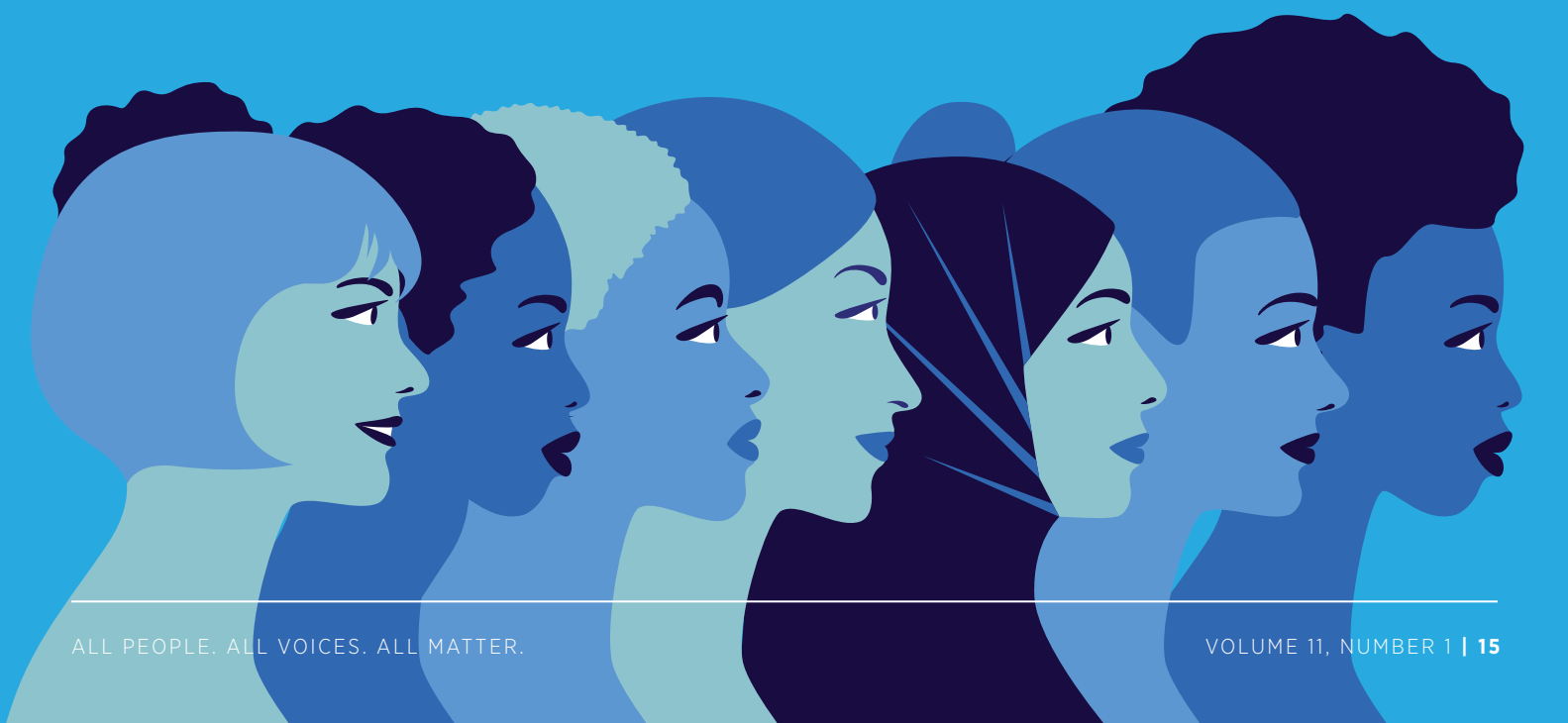
The Resolution focuses on 4 pillars: **Participation, Protection, Prevention, and Relief and Recovery.**

Read the full resolution here:

<https://bit.ly/2PJKx7K>

**Read more about UNSCR1325, its significance,
and its content here:**

<https://bit.ly/2XQshOk>



REPORT OF THE 2nd ANNUAL CREATING A RESILIENT COMMUNITY:

FROM TRAUMA TO HEALING CONFERENCE

We were in a community conflict, a national conflict, a global conflict. This virus, Covid-19, gave us the opportunity to see conflict through the transformative paradigm through which PJI lives, an opportunity for growth and transformation. The conference allowed an opportunity to find peace amidst the storm, to bring equanimity to our community, and to build resilience collectively.

Rachel Allen, PJI Director

On April 21st, the Peace and Justice Institute at Valencia College, along with the Early Learning Coalition of Orange County and title sponsor Orlando Health, hosted a virtual conference on the topics of resilience, trauma informed practices, and overcoming adverse childhood experiences (ACEs).

The Creating a Resilient Community: From Trauma to Healing Conference is in its second year and was developed in 2019 to raise awareness in Central Florida about ACEs and trauma-informed practices.

This year, 505 individuals from 9 sectors and 217 different organizations registered for the conference. 496 were confirmed as conference participants on the day of the event with 92.35% of those who took the post-conference survey stating they were able to attend the conference in its entirety (9:00 am - 3:30 pm). 79% of 2020 conference participants were new to the conference and had not attended in 2019 while 21% attended 2 years in a row.

Due to Covid-19, the 2020 conference moved with short notice to a virtual platform with the support of the Valencia College East Campus Tech division to ensure that community members in Central Florida and beyond would continue to learn about ACEs and trauma-informed practices and receive tools to support this work at a critical time for our community.

"Never has there been a better time for a conversation about how we support each other in our individual and collective quest for resiliency," said Karen Willis, CEO of the Early Learning Coalition of Orange County. "Not a single person remains untouched by this pandemic. It has indeed become about all of us and how we together build a stronger, more equitable, and more resilient community."

This year's virtual format offered attendees practical tools and critical insight from the keynote speakers and resilience experts Dr. Kenneth Ginsburg and Dr. Wendy Ellis.

As a pediatrician specializing in Adolescent Medicine at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and a Professor of Pediatrics at the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine, and Co-

Founder and Director of Programs at the Center for Parent and Teen Communication, Dr. Ginsburg offered practical approaches for parents, professionals and our Central Florida community to foster internal resilience during these uncertain times.

Dr. Ellis is the director of the Building Community Resilience (BRC) Collaborative and Networks at the Milken Institute School of Public Health at The George Washington University. In her presentation with her colleague Harrison Newton, they offered a strengths-based approach aimed at promoting resilience in vulnerable communities by improving access to supports and buffers that help individuals and communities bounce back from trauma and thrive.

In addition to the speakers, conference participants engaged in mindfulness practices, heard local musical performances, and received relevant community resources and specific ways to engage with this work around trauma healing and resilience in Central Florida.

"There is so much value in educating our community on the long-term effects of adverse childhood experiences," said Marie Martinez, operations manager of Orlando Health Howard Phillips Center for Children & Families. "If we can provide a better understanding of these issues to leaders, mental health professionals and individuals within the community, then we can better address the needs of people who have been impacted by childhood trauma and abuse."

When participants were asked in the conference survey about their motivations for attending the conference, the majority of responses referenced seeking new information, knowledge, tools, and personal development and participants were hoping to learn how to help individuals and communities become more resilient. The survey data reflected that the conference delivered what participants were hoping to receive, with 98.82% of respondents saying that the conference met their expectations, with many noting in narrative feedback that it actually exceeded their expectations. Following the conference, participant Roger L. Weeden, Esquire, Attorney and Counselor at Law shared:

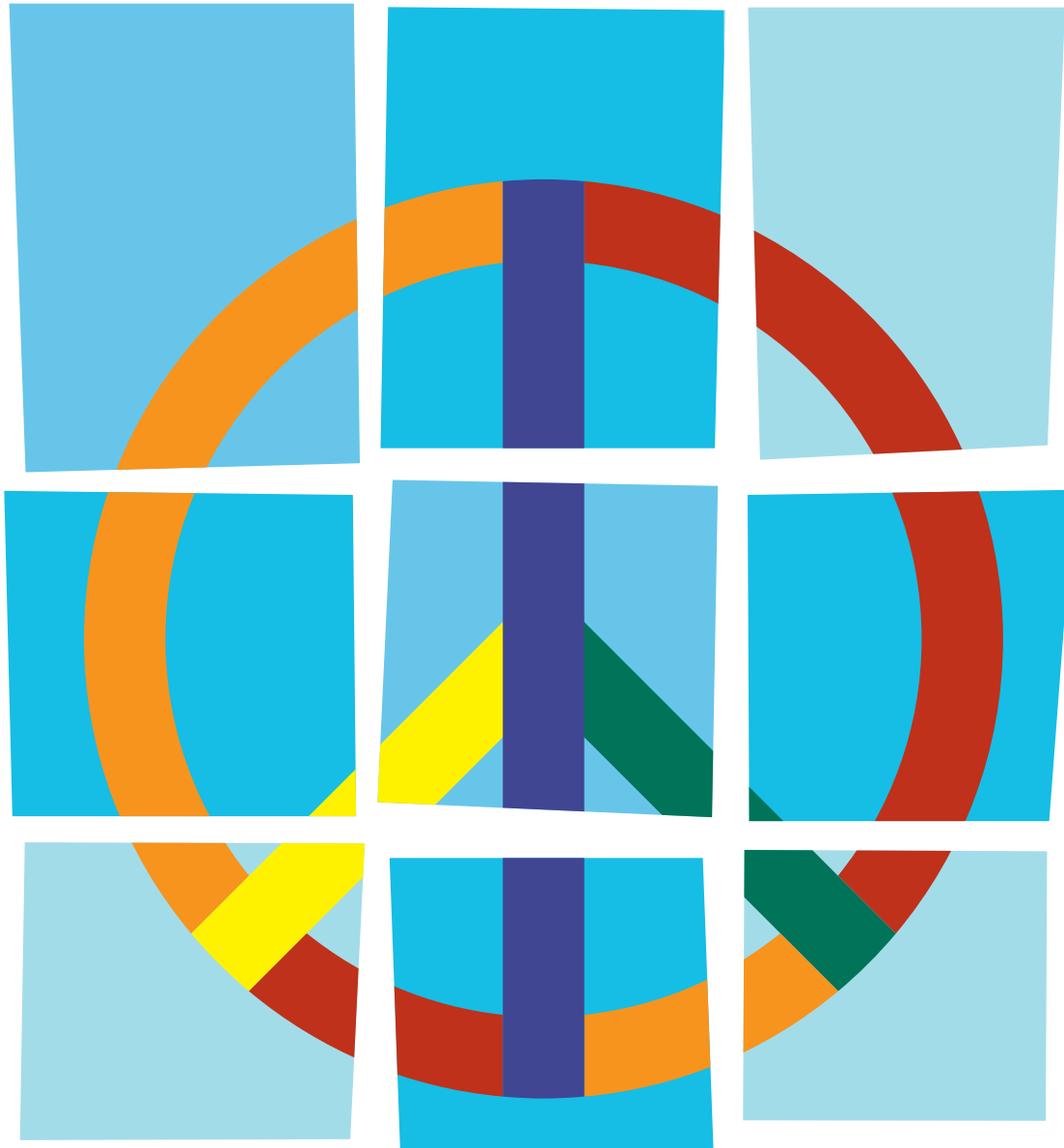
"I was blown away by the Conference... the duality of Adverse Childhood Experiences and Adverse Community Environments are incredibly enlightening concepts, which educators, government leaders, mental health providers, medical providers and criminal justice participants must embrace and develop policies and programs around. The brain and related behavioral science put out by Dr. Ginsburg was also incredible and very comprehensive. Again, thanks for all your dedication and work in this area!"

Moving Forward Together into 2021

Since 2019, a network of partners across 9 community sectors has convened to drive forward the vision of "transforming our region into one of prevention, hope, healing, and resilience for all". This network currently has over 250 individuals and is growing in both membership and momentum around the work of preventing adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), healing from trauma, and building a resilient community in Central Florida.

The Peace and Justice Institute plans to host the third annual Creating a Resilient Community Conference in April of 2021.





GLOBAL PEACE WEEK

SEPTEMBER 21ST-24TH | VIRTUAL

Join PJI for a conference aimed at growing positive peace practices. Topics include emotional intelligence, Principles For How We Treat Each Other, conflict transformation, mindfulness, resilience, forgiveness, conversations on race, reverence of nature, and peaceful communication.

PEACE AND
JUSTICE INSTITUTE
All People, All Voices, All Matter.



VALENCIA COLLEGE



PEACE AND JUSTICE INSTITUTE
Fall 2020 Calendar

For details visit www.valenciacollege.edu/pji

All events are subject to change. Additional events will be added throughout the year. For the most up-to-date PJI calendar check Facebook at www.facebook.com/valenciapeaceandjustice or the PJI website at www.valenciacollege.edu/pji

MULTIPLE DATES (TBA)

Understanding Allyship

In this session, participants will gain an understanding of the history of racism in the United States. Participants will review the concept of privilege, and how it presents in different communities. The session will then invite participants to contribute their own ideas on how to support anti-racist action, and offer suggestions for allyship.

Virtual | Check online for additional details.

MULTIPLE DATES (TBA)

The Dreams Series

In Partnership with the City of Orlando’s MLK Commission, PJI facilitates the Dream Series, workshops designed to educate our community around race, implicit bias, and systems of privilege and oppression, moving us toward racial justice and equity.

Virtual | Check online for additional details.



SEPTEMBER 21 - 24

Global Peace Week

Join PJI for a conference aimed at growing positive peace practices. Topics include emotional intelligence, Principles For How We Treat Each Other, conflict transformation, mindfulness, resilience, forgiveness, conversations on race, reverence of nature, and peaceful communication.

Virtual | Check online for the full schedule of events.

SEPTEMBER 21

International Day of Peace

The International Day of Peace (“Peace Day”) is observed around the world each year on September 21st. Established in 1981 by unanimous United Nations resolution 36/37, the General Assembly has declared this as a day devoted to “commemorating and strengthening the ideals of peace both within and among all nations and peoples.”

Virtual | Time TBA | Check online for additional details.



SEPTEMBER 15, SEPTEMBER 30, OCTOBER 14

#Votes4All: The Power to Create a More Perfect Democracy

Inspired by the role of voting in the Ocoee Massacre, join us for workshops designed to illuminate the history of voter suppression in Central Florida as it relates to gender and race. On the centennial of women’s suffrage and the massacre in Ocoee, we aim to acknowledge our difficult history and move toward reconciliation. #Votes4All believes that the power to create a more perfect democracy lies in the power of the truth and, as ever, in the power of the people. This program is generously funded by a grant from Florida Humanities.

Register at: bit.ly/Votes4All2020

Virtual | 6 - 8 PM EST | Check online for additional details.



OCTOBER 21 - 22

Inclusive Excellence Speaker Series

The Inclusive Excellence Series is a collaborative effort to educate our community on a topic aimed at improving inclusive excellence - the notion that a community or institution's success is dependent on how well it values, engages and includes the rich diversity of its members. This year's keynote speaker will be Austin Channing Brown, author of *I'm Still Here: Black Dignity in a World Made for Whiteness*.

Virtual | Check online for additional details.



NOVEMBER 18

Peace Breakfast: An Interfaith Gathering

Join a diverse group of faith and worldview leaders for a discussion on the historic and changing role women play in religious and thought traditions.

Register at: <https://bit.ly/PeaceBreakfast2020>

Virtual | 9:00 - 10:15 AM EST | Check online for additional details.

SEPTEMBER 21 - OCTOBER 4

Global Peace Film Festival

The Global Peace Film Festival, established in 2003, uses the power of the moving image to further the cause of peace on earth. From the outset, the GPFV envisioned "peace" not as the absence of conflict but as a framework for channeling, processing and resolving conflict through respectful and non-violent means. People of good faith have real differences that deserve to be discussed, debated and contested. GPFV works to connect expression - artistic, political, social and personal - to positive, respectful vehicles for action and change. The festival program is carefully curated to create a place for open dialogue, using the films as catalysts for change.

Check online for additional details at: <https://peacefilmfest.org/>

JULY 5 - OCTOBER 5

#ValenciaVotes Campaign

#ValenciaVotes is a campaign organized by PJI with the aim to encourage voter registration and participation, providing educational tools, reminders on voting, and educational events. The campaign partners with organizations throughout the community.

Check online for additional details about the virtual campaign.



The Need To Know A Civil Rights Journey

By Paul Chapman

During the fall 2018 semester, I used my sabbatical to explore our nation's civil rights history by going to places that have significant meaning and that I had never visited before. Here are a few of my stories from the road.



Mississippi - Emmett Till

The lynching of Emmett Till on August 28, 1955 is widely regarded as the start of the major portion of the U.S. Civil Rights Movement. It is why the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom took place on August 28, 1963 and why the MLK Memorial in Washington D.C. was scheduled to be dedicated on the same date in 2011. Because of Hurricane Irene, the memorial was dedicated in mid-October of the same year.

People can change. On a Sunday morning in September, 2018, I spent time visiting the places important to the story of Emmett Till. I paused on the banks of the Tallahatchie River, where Till's body was found, to pay my respects and reaffirm my commitment to continually learn and unlearn, to challenge and transform.

Later that afternoon, two other visitors and I met with Patrick Weems, from the Emmett Till Interpretive Center in Sumner, Mississippi, to learn more about Emmett's life, his mother's grief and the impact of an unjust system still haunting this country. Patrick told me a story about a local man who one day showed up to the Sumner County courthouse, site of the trial against two men charged with Till's murder. The man was shouting racial slurs, threatening violence, and complaining that he did not want to hear anything more about "this history". His intentions to use his truck to tear out the newly installed historical marker in front of the courthouse were obvious.

The local sheriff called a member of the Center, Carolyn Webb, for help. She was able to get this man to slow down and think about Emmett by appealing to the fact that this man also has a 14-year-old son. He paused and drove away. A little while later, the man showed up to Carolyn's house and said he and his wife wanted to donate the cloth for the unveiling of the historical marker planned for the next day. This man even said he would protect the marker from any harm from now on. He slowed down, made a connection between his son and the humanity of Emmett Till, and changed his actions. Did he have a daily peace practice before this incident? My gut tells me he did, but it needed to be more inclusive. Carolyn offered a pathway for changing and he took it.



I paused on the banks of the Tallahatchie River, where Till's body was found, to pay my respects and reaffirm my commitment to continually learn and unlearn, to challenge and transform.

Atlanta, Georgia

While I waited for the tour of MLK's birth house to begin, a nice lady named Greta B. Yates (I found out later) walked up to me and politely said, "Can I ask you a personal question?" She asked me why, as a white man, I thought it was important to visit Dr. King's birth home and to learn about Civil Rights history overall. I simply told her I was there because I need to know this history for my own personal growth and continuing education. I certainly never knew it from my perspective growing up as a white middle-class kid. We both had a sense of destiny being involved in what others might call our serendipitous meeting. Out of all the people waiting, she picked me, someone who is using a sabbatical to explore this history. Greta appreciated my willingness to answer her questions. She told me she was thinking about asking other people, including a few white women, but hesitated based on how the question might be received. We were able to have a friendly and meaningful conversation on Civil Rights history and our country's struggle with continuing issues around race and justice. Moments like this can bring a rush of uncertainty but also create the opportunity to be authentic. I am glad she asked me because it gave me yet another chance to reflect on and reaffirm why I did all of this during my sabbatical.





Montgomery, Alabama

I felt a different but meaningful connection between what I saw in Montgomery and an experience at Dr. King's birth home in Atlanta. (Reminder - I was asked by a black woman why, as a white man, I thought it was important to visit King's house). I had asked Dr. Bob Weiland, then Curator and Supervisor of the Confederate White House, about the diversity of visitors to the Confederate White House. His gracious first answer covered the various nationalities that visit the house but when further pressed about a different kind of diversity, namely black visitors, he told me they are only about 5% of the annual visitor traffic.

Why would any black person visit this monument to the Confederacy? Unfortunately, I did not have the opportunity to ask anyone in the house because the only other visitors present were a white family. Maybe the answer to this question is obvious and I did not need to hear it from a black visitor.

Two women from the Southern Poverty Law Center, who happen to be black, bluntly stated they would never set foot in the Confederate White House because, from their perspective, it ignores the brutal history of slavery and segregation. I agree. For his part, Dr. Weiland told me he is always ready to engage visitors in conversation about these topics.

In many places throughout this country, stories about our racial history have been told from a very selective, dominant perspective. For example, I often hear the assertion that the Confederate flag and interrelated Civil War memorials are part of our history and must be allowed to have their own space. However, there is often no space for the rest of the story to be told - it is an incomplete history. I was told by National Park Service Ranger April Baldwin that because only one side of the story has been told, places like Montgomery and Selma are still highly divided cities.

Most thoughtful people understand that trying to navigate the complexities and hard realities of our history is arduous and brings with it lots of conflict. How do we get to a place and time where the whole history can be told and heard? The weight of shame, blame and guilt surrounding this history seems at times unmovable. But with serious effort, perhaps it can be reconciled and healed. I am reminded of my experience in Sumner, Mississippi, and the story of the man who wanted to rip out the Emmett Till historic marker, saying we need to stop bringing up that part of our history, all while being just steps away from yet another Civil War memorial. By making the connection with his own 14-year-old son and Emmett Till, he was able to change. This complex history sits patiently in the middle of our divisions, waiting and relying on thoughtful people to create common ground solutions.





Little Rock, Arkansas

The 1pm tour of Little Rock's Central High School with Ranger Randy Dotson had probably twenty people, four of which were a group of ladies from a local church. One woman from that group said she graduated from Central High in 1956, a year before the Little Rock Nine integrated the school. I asked what she would like people to know about those times and she said "That's how it was back then. We didn't know any different," referring to the Southern segregated way of life. Another woman from that group of four calmly stated, during our comment/question time, "White people don't treat black people negatively anymore. Negativity today only comes from black people." Ranger Randy, several others and I spoke up immediately and offered several examples of obvious and blatant racism from Charleston, South Carolina to Charlottesville, Virginia in just the last few years. I did not think I would hear such a statement on the tour but I was wrong.

Paul Chapman is a Professor of Humanities and Peace Studies at Valencia College. He is the PJI Coordinator on the Winter Park Campus.



Florida - Statewide and Local

Engaging with the local and state civil rights history was an important part of my journey. I spent a few weeks exploring Florida's civil rights history, from the peaceful protests of Mrs. Katherine Twine of St. Augustine to Jacksonville's "Ax Handle Saturday" attacks in August 1960. Closer to home I learned more about Harriette and Harry Moore, a couple from Mims, Florida who, because of their work to educate and enfranchise black communities, were murdered on Christmas night in 1951. Here in Orlando, there were peaceful protests against entrenched segregation, including Stroud's Drugstore in 1962. For those who want an immediate physical reminder of this history, a statue of the first two black Orlando Police officers, Belvin Perry, Sr. and Richard Arthur Jones, hired in 1951, stands in the historic Washington Shores neighborhood at Hankins Circle and Wooden Blvd.

I encourage everyone to explore this history through local resources like the Wells' Built Museum and the African American exhibit at the Orange County Regional History Museum. The regional museum has an exhibit on the 1920 Ocoee Massacre which opens in October 2020. The Holocaust Memorial Resource and Education Center of Florida is running an exhibit on uprooting prejudice, based on the artifact collection of Daryl Davis.

Web Resources

- Accord Freedom Trail: <https://accordfreedomtrail.org/>
- Charlottesville: Race and Terror - VICE News: [Charlottesville - Race and Terror](https://www.vice.com/en-us/article/charlottesville-race-and-terror)
- Emmett Till Interpretive Center: <https://www.emmett-till.org/>
- Harry T. & Harriette V. Moore Cultural Complex, Inc: <https://www.harryharriette Moore.org/>
- The Holocaust Memorial Resource and Education Center: <https://www.holocaustedu.org/>
- Orange County Regional History Center: <https://www.thehistorycenter.org/>
- Orlando Sentinel! "Teens Spark Orlando's Civil-rights Era (provides more detail on the sit-ins): <https://www.orlandosentinel.com/features/os-black-teens-civil-rights-story.html?>
- United States Civil Rights Trail: <https://civilrightstrail.com/>
- Wells' Built Museum: <https://www.wellsbuilt.org/>

Selected Recommended Readings

- Brotemarkle, Benjamin D. *Crossing Division Street: A History of the African American Community in Orlando, Florida*. Union Institute & University, 2002.
- Murray, Pauli. *Song in a weary throat: Memoir of an American pilgrimage*. Liveright Publishing, 2018.
- Thompson, Geraldine Fortenberry. *Black America Series: Orlando Florida*. Arcadia Publishing, 2003.
- Tyson, Timothy B. *The Blood of Emmett Till*. Simon and Schuster, 2017.

Paul's Blog:
chapmansabbatical.blogspot.com

THE URGENCY OF NOW

We know that systemic injustice still prevails in our nation; and that means it also exists in organizations. PJI Business Solutions continues to serve as a trusted source to facilitate the critical conversations necessary for a healthy, accountable, and inclusive workplace.

Reach out to us today to schedule a workshop or training series for your organization:

<https://bit.ly/PJIWorkshops>

peaceandjustice@valenciacollege.edu

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Conversations on Race | Understanding Bias | Understanding Privilege
Conversations in Inclusiveness | The Principles for How We Treat Each Other
Leadership & Resilience: Tapping Into Our Source

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JUSTICE INSTITUTE
All People. All Voices. All Matter.

VALENCIA COLLEGE

Harnessing the Power of Truth

By Joy Wallace Dickinson



#Votes4All: Toward a More Perfect Democracy

The Peace and Justice Institute's latest workshop series sheds light on gender and race in voter suppression and on the value and power of the ballot.

"The right to vote has always been about power and who has it and doesn't want to give it up," notes a documentary about the decades-long women's suffrage movement that culminated in the summer of 1920. The passage of the 19th amendment that the movement achieved a century ago created the largest expansion of voting rights in U.S. history.

In 1920, women were emerging in power. African Americans, some of whom had served in World War I, were also emerging in power. But in Central Florida, Election Day that year ignited the nation's largest incident of voting-day violence. Now called the Ocoee Massacre of 1920, the conflagration and death began after a prosperous African American man, Mose Norman, tried to vote.

In 2018, the Peace and Justice Institute and partners presented a series of free public workshops focused on the once-hidden history of the massacre and designed to inspire discussion about race in America.

This year the Institute launched a second series, titled "#Votes4All: The Power to Create a More Perfect Democracy," that seeks to harness the power of truth about the past to the goal of an expanded, more inclusive electorate.

In 1920, following the August ratification of the 19th amendment, which prohibited exclusion from voting on the basis of sex, some white men in the South expressed vehement opposition to black women voting. The Ku Klux Klan staged marches threatening violence throughout cities including Orlando, just days before the

November 1920 presidential election. Some of those in power definitely did not want to give that power up. And some of the white women who were gaining power were not sharing it with black women.

"In portraying the divisions of the time and in organizing the #Votes4All series, we sought to bring more attention and discussion to a difficult area in the history of voting rights," notes Heather Bryson, a historian and Valencia faculty member who helped craft the #Votes4All programs.

A talk by Bryson that begins each session in the series examines the racism of the era but also highlights national and Florida women heroes, such as Ida B. Wells and Mary McLeod Bethune, who persisted in their struggle to access the ballot. In the session format as planned, after

Bryson's talk participants broke into groups of four to talk about the issues raised, responding to questions and clear guidelines that provide a safe environment for discussion.

Explorations online

Before quarantine policies related to the COVID-19 pandemic began in March, three #Votes4All sessions took place as planned, at Valencia's East and West Campuses and in Winter Park. Sessions scheduled for Seminole State College, Kaley Square Community Center in Orlando, and the Lakeshore Center in Ocoee will be transformed into online forums, to take place on Zoom on September 15th, 30th and October 14th.

The online sessions will continue to explore "missing history" and also address the racism of the early women's movement, acknowledge the historic threat of women in power, and provide an opportunity for truth and reconciliation.

The seminar content received kudos from participants in the sessions that took place earlier in the year. "Very inspiring," one participant noted on an anonymous assessment form.

"It changed my attitude on how to deal with difficult family members." Another described the session as "informative, enlightening, and empowering." The program "inspired me to share the information I've heard today," noted another.

The #Votes4All forums are designed to reach all Central Florida residents and are free of

charge. A theme of the project is the importance of every vote in local, state, and federal elections as an integral part of a thriving democracy.

"We believe the power to create a more perfect democracy lies in the power of the truth and, as ever, in the power of the people," notes Rachel Allen, director of the Peace and Justice Institute.

The #Vote4All series is supported by grants from Florida Humanities and the National Endowment for the Humanities and by community partners including the Alliance for Truth and Justice; the Dorothy Turner Johnson Branch of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History; Kaley Square in Orlando; the Lakeshore Center of Ocoee; the League of Women Voters of Orange County and Seminole County, Florida; the RICHES program at the University of Central Florida; Seminole State College, Valencia College; and the Woman's Club of Winter Park.

Joy Wallace Dickinson grew up in Orlando. During a 20-year span, she has written hundreds of "Florida Flashback" features in the Orlando Sentinel about aspects of Central Florida's past. She's also the author of books including Orlando: City of Dreams and is a member of the League of Women Voters of Orange County, Florida, and the Alliance for Truth and Justice.



We Are More Than Our Stories

A Testimonial from Co-facilitator Jennifer Tomlinson



The first time I learned of the metaphor of “Windows and Mirrors” was when I read an article by Emily Style entitled “Curriculum As Window and Mirror.” The act of sharing our stories provides an opportunity to become a window for someone to see a new perspective, or a mirror for people to see themselves in each other, and create a connection. It is a great strategy to facilitate learning, and one that was used to help facilitate the #Votes4All: The Power to Create a More Perfect Democracy workshop series through a story-sharing technique known as serial testimony.

The #Votes4All series of workshops is ambitious in its aim to tell the difficult history of America as it pertains to voting rights, and the unfortunate racism black women experienced as women fought to ratify the 19th Amendment. As the #Votes4All committee met to discuss how to create spaces to share this harsh history of America, while also honoring the history of black women in America, it was apparent that the exchange of stories among workshop attendees would provide the best opportunities for learning and growth.

Even with this in mind, the act of sharing stories requires workshop participants to consider the risk of vulnerability. As a black woman, I find the thought of sharing personal stories risky and something I struggle with daily. The history of black women’s stories being used as tools to help others heal, while they remain broken, can be seen as the primary source for their reluctance to share. There is no denying the deep history of black women’s stories being disregarded or, frankly, ignored.

This brings me back to the metaphor of being a “Window or Mirror” and why at times I do not feel like being one or the other. If we deconstruct the metaphor, we can question what it actually means to be a window. When my story becomes a window for others to see through in the safety of their proverbial “homes,” it quickly feels like I have been used as a tool or exploited. For example, it is not enough for someone to hear my story just to return back to their safety bubble, and only pull out my story during conversations over cocktails. A burden to build a window in a home I do not reside in or have access to is not unlike other emotional burdens black women often have to bear to help provide emotional comfort for others. Often, the window is forgotten; over time, it becomes dirtied by dust and only made clean when it is needed to voyeur through as a means to help cultivate emotional responses, soothe white guilt, or serve as a tool to make a point.

What if I don’t want to be a window anymore? What if I would like for you to step outside in the open with me? Sharing stories in safe spaces where all people are participating in an equal exchange of authentic experiences, being a window or a mirror for others, often can be healing to the soul. When someone truly sees you – the window – and does not just see through you, it allows for validation. When someone can see themselves in you as a mirror, it can create empathy, but that requires psychological safety, trust, and open-mindedness.

As a black woman who struggles with being vulnerable in spaces with affluent white women, it has taken time for me to feel safe to share

without fear of exploitation or of being looked down upon with pity. And in my authentic truth, I have to admit that I am not all the way there yet. What has helped is finding great allies whom I trust and finding comfort in creating affinity spaces to unpack my fears. I have realized that if I do not share my fears, those who I am afraid of will not know how to help me feel safe. If I do not specify what I need to be restored, those who have done harm will not know what they need to do to aid with healing.

I am working on being stronger, but my story sharing is always purposeful now. I share to connect and to help enlighten. I share to build broken bridges. What has been wonderful about #Votes4All is that intent was equally matched with purposeful collaboration with a diverse group. The strategy to share history and ensure a safe space for dialogue was thoughtful because it considered the spirit of the attendees and not just their minds. There is much more work to do to continue the conversation. To invoke a constructive outcome, I challenge you to consider the possibility of embracing discussions on how black and white women can connect for the greater good of building a perfect democracy. There is no better time than right now. What say you? Are you willing to follow me on this journey?

When describing what she does, Jennifer Tomlinson would say, “She helps people find pathways to their aspirations through education and teaching”. She is able to live this purpose as Interim Dean of Learning Support on the West Campus of Valencia College.

PEACE NEWS



New Zealand's Prime Minister May Be the Most Effective Leader on the Planet

Jacinda Ardern, the 39-year-old prime minister of New Zealand, is forging a path of her own. Her leadership style is one of empathy in a crisis that tempts people to fend for themselves. Her messages are clear, consistent, and somehow simultaneously sobering and soothing. And her approach isn't just resonating with her people on an emotional level. It is also working remarkably well.

Source: [The Atlantic](https://www.theatlantic.com)



Businessman's Banner Project Lifts Up Lake County's Class Of 2020 Amid COVID-19 Pandemic

An experience of disappointment is shared with graduates across Lake County as they cannot finish their Senior year in person. Eustis businessman, Tim Totten has decided to do something about that. His company Celebrating Heroes creates banners, typically to honor veterans who have died, and for other occasions. Now he's picked up a volunteer project. It could cost him about \$75,000, though he hopes to recoup much of that through donations. Totten says he'll put the names and faces of Lake County's graduating seniors on three-foot-long vinyl banners.

Source: www.wmfe.org



Emptier Jails Could Stay That Way

Cleveland's city jail has released close to 900 inmates in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in its overcrowded facilities. And the response isn't unique - New York, LA, Detroit, Chicago, New Orleans, and Houston are just a few of the other cities that have taken similar measures. While an immediate response to the pandemic, advocates say the release of low-level offenders could fare well for larger prison reforms that have been slowly taking hold.

Source: reasonstobecheerful.world

CELEBRATING PEACE NEWS LOCALLY, NATIONALLY, AND INTERNATIONALLY.

In this volume PJI Co-Editors focused on finding positive peace news surrounding the COVID-19 global pandemic.

Washington's Muslim Community Begins a Ramadan Like No Other

The Muslim holy month of Ramadan begins this year in the midst of a pandemic. Around the world, Muslims will not be able to observe the holiday as they normally do — with 30 nights of communal prayer and post-sunset feasting. Instead, they'll spend the long days of fasting mostly in their own homes. And yet Washington Imam Talib Shareef has a surprising prediction: "For some people, it's going to be their best Ramadan ever."

Source: [Washington Post](#)



'There's Always a Rainbow After the Rain.' Challenged by Coronavirus, LGBTQ Communities Worldwide Plan Digital Pride Celebrations

In an ordinary year, Pride celebrations would offer a chance to gather together, celebrate the achievements of the community and reflect on the future for social change. But three months into 2020, more than 220 Pride celebrations scheduled worldwide have been forced to cancel or postpone due to the coronavirus pandemic. Now, with rights coming under threat in various places and exacerbated by the virus outbreak, organizers are finding innovative ways of reaching out to their communities to provide alternative spaces online to celebrate.

Source: [Time](#)



Here's How Lockdowns Have Improved Air Quality Around The World

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused industrial activity to shut down and cancelled flights and other journeys, slashing greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution around the world. If there is something positive to take from this terrible crisis, it could be that it's offered a taste of the air we might breathe in a low-carbon future.

Source: [weforum.org](#)



With Gratitude

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