

PEACE AND JUSTICE INSTITUTE

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ALL PEOPLE. ALL VOICES. ALL MATTER.

We Are All One



Many nights I have the opportunity to become a family historian and genealogist. I spend hours researching my family tree, adding new members and notes that provide clues to my next discovery. My African heritage goes back only so far because records were not kept during enslavement. It is easier to trace my maternal mixed heritage because those records were passed down through years of oral and written history. My DNA research affirms that 99.9 percent of humans are genetically similar.

We are more similar than we are different from one another, but too many focus on our differences rather than recognizing our shared humanity. Years ago, when I worked at Florida International University, one of my coworkers authored a book that he could not get published. He wrote that within cultures and between people we have much in common that unites us. When African Americans gather at a home to socialize and eat together, often we end up in the kitchen. That might sound familiar because most cultures have a similar tradition of hospitality, which is PJI's first Principle For How We Treat Each Other, inviting the generosity of a friendly welcome. As my co-worker shopped his book to several publishers, most came back with the same comment, "We love your book, it is well written, but it will never sell because it is not controversial enough."

Respecting differences and acknowledging similarities should never be controversial, it should be universal. I believe reading the Principles For How We Treat Each Other and embracing the vision of "All People. All Voices. All Matter." belong in our oral and written histories as cultural traditions to be passed down and discovered by future generations.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "S. Hutcheson, III". The signature is stylized and fluid.

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The sunflower is Ukraine's national flower and has been used as a symbol of peace.



Letter From The Director

Since its inception, PJI's vision and mission have honored the dignity, identity, and integrity of all people. This requires a commitment to understanding the self and others, respecting differences, and acknowledging unconscious bias that can interfere with our human connection. Providing windows into the lives and history of all people, regardless of their race, gender, religion, ability, sexual orientation, philosophy, and perspectives brings us closer to one another, to our nation's aspirational vision that all people are created equal, and our universal human need to belong.

In a larger framework, we believe the work of PJI lays the foundation for what is needed in a thriving world. While we watch on the geopolitical stage what can happen when autocratic oppression engulfs a country, as we are witnessing with the assault on Ukraine by Vladimir Putin, we are reminded that one leader's actions can cause violence, and massive physical and emotional trauma, while respect for freedom of opinion and expression, and freedom of choice leads to peace and justice. We note worrisome impulses in our country that urge us to attend to our shared humanity, which is by design fragile, requiring an educated, engaged citizenry.

As an educational organization, PJI designs learning experiences that invite participants to find their voice, using practices and processes proven effective with tens of thousands of individuals from multiple sectors in Central Florida and beyond. The foundation of PJI's transformative work is the Principles For How We Treat Each Other, practices of respect and community building. The Principles are an invitation to listen, speak our truth, make space for unpopular answers, suspend judgment and turn to wonder when we hear viewpoints

that do not align with our own. Each of these practices is essential to support the health and well-being of individuals and communities, and ultimately a flourishing nation.

Storytelling and dialogue are at the center of PJI's practice to develop self-awareness and meaningful relationships. There is an inherent risk in telling our stories, inviting vulnerability, but ultimately creating the possibility for dialogue, healing, and relationship. Stories create opportunities for empathy and compassion and help us connect to one another across differences. Stories often include missing histories, not found in textbooks, which provide insight into lived experiences. These missing histories sometimes reveal historic harms that when shared, invite healing and strengthen individual and collective resilience.

PJI does not shame, blame, use guilt or teach that anyone is morally superior or inferior. PJI does honor the possibilities and potential in people, and the promise of our country by teaching that "All People. All Voices. All Matter."

Rachel C. Allen
Peace and Justice Institute, Director

As the Journal went to press, there was tragic news of epidemic gun violence across the country. At PJI, we believe social change is possible and action on common sense gun reform must prevail.

GLOBAL PEACE WEEK

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Join PJI for a week of free workshops and films aimed at growing positive peace practices. Topics include emotional intelligence, yoga, meditation, conflict transformation, mindfulness, interfaith understanding, trauma healing, forgiveness, the healing power of nature, and peaceful communication.

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GLOBAL
PEACE FILM
FESTIVAL

VALENCIA COLLEGE

Student Development



TAKING A LEAP OF FAITH

An Interview with Hank Van Putten

Britney Pierce of PJI interviews Hank Van Putten, Lead PJI Facilitator and Anti-Racist Educator in Central Florida.

What does "All People. All Voices. All Matter." mean to you? During my career in the Newton Public Schools, our district's culture intentionally lived out the meaning of "respect for human differences." This core belief caused everyone to examine what that meant for each of us individually, collectively, and most importantly with our students. "All People. All Voices. All Matter." - it resonated for me then (albeit in different words) - and even more so today in my role with PJI. As an anti-racist educator, it is critical for folks to understand three things: anti-racism is a verb; antiracism is not just about the black/white dichotomy; and anti-racism is not just about racism. Who is present at the table? Whose voice is here? Whose voice needs to be here? What can I do to bring that voice to the table? "All People. All Voices. All Matter."

Who is someone you admire and why? It'd be difficult to narrow that down to one person as so many have influenced

my career, growth and development. Certainly, my parents, whom I only had for a short period of time in my life but whose mark is indelible in my memory. My choirmaster Richard Amend who taught us little Black boys responsibility and the discipline required to be a good ensemble singer. Frank Rife who taught me the magic of positive reinforcement with my students. John Saphier who taught me how to use different repertoires of teaching to bring equity to my classroom. Beverly Tatum who taught me about racial identity development and its classroom impact on the academic success of all students. Lee Mun Wah who taught me how to be comfortable when talking and learning about racism.

What was a formative childhood experience for you in relation to the work you do today? Growing up in the late 50s and into the 60s, my Mom and I would watch the Lawrence Welk Show each week. We anxiously awaited



Click the image above to watch Hank Van Putten's TEDx Talk: "When It Comes to Racism, Are You a Non or an Anti?"

the performance of Arthur Duncan ("the colored dancer" as he was referred to then). In hindsight, she was determined to provide me with an example of someone who was successful and looked like me. She knew that I was receiving messages that were not kind about Black folks, folks who looked like me. I played out her fears in the 4th grade on the playground. I joined a group of young Black classmates who stayed away from the boy (himself Black) who was "too dark, and ya might catch something if you got too close to him." The boy was often the last one chosen to join a team. I use those two stories today to highlight the early messages we receive. When I look up the word white it is often described as "pure, blameless, and without sin," while the meaning of the word black is often described as "dark, dangerous, negative, the opposite of white." In the 4th grade on the playground, I was playing out internalized oppression without realizing it or understanding its impact on my classmates and myself.

What is your proudest accomplishment? I think that at some point, we each have to take a leap of faith in our lives. My leap happened in 2009 when I reconnected with my high school sweetheart, my wife Gail, whom I'd not seen in person for 40 years. Even though the blended family Gail and I now have together - four children, ten grandchildren, and one great-grandchild - is spread out from Florida to Massachusetts and California, I give thanks every day for making it back to each other and sharing our love with all of them.

What motivated you to make a TedTalk about Anti-Racism and what was that experience like? It's been something I've always wanted to prove to myself that I could do. Although I knew the deadline, I didn't start completing

the application until a few days before it was due when I remembered some advice I often give to others: "You'll never know unless you try, because the worst that can happen is that you won't be selected." Simultaneously, I 'heard' these three sentences repeatedly speak to me: "Put in the work. Earn the spot. Now shine." I'm blessed and glad that I took the opportunity to IGNITE (the application theme) those in my sphere of influence with the messages of my talk.

Do you have any hobbies? I'm a model railroader. And being a Papa is priceless!

What are you reading now? *My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies*, by Resmaa Menakem.

What is your favorite travel memory? Going to and traversing a section of the Great Wall of China. Seeing the ruins of the USS Arizona in Pearl Harbor with droplets of oil still rising to the surface.

What's a motor that represents you? The motor of a 1969 Camaro SS! Horsepower to use when needed. Style for the times to fit in. Uniquely qualified to draw the attention of others to 'take a look' at what's going on.

What's a natural talent you'd like to have? I sang soprano in a boys' choir at Grace Episcopal Church when growing up in Jamaica, New York. The memories of singing, in tune, with very high notes that reverberated off the roof of my mouth are still with me. I SO MISS not only those times, but that feeling of joy with my choirmates. I wish I could sing soprano again!



Hank Van Putten is seated in the center of the choir group at Grace Episcopal Church in Jamaica, Queens.

Better Together

PJI Facilitates the Seminole County Youth Summit

The past few years have been difficult for young people. Evidence of this is found in the 2020 Florida Youth Substance Abuse Survey (FYSAS), one of the first large-scale youth data collection efforts to include a comprehensive set of adverse childhood experiences, commonly known as ACEs. ACEs, traumatic events experienced during childhood, have been linked to a broad range of negative health and behavior outcomes, including impaired cognitive development, high-risk behavior such as substance use, difficulty forming positive social relationships, high rates of chronic disease, and employment and financial difficulties. The high school version of the survey measures 10 areas of childhood trauma with known links to health and behavior.

The 2020 Seminole County FYSAS found that the average number of ACEs reported from the sample of 454 high school students was 1.7. Exposure to four or more ACEs is considered a high level of trauma and 17.4% of these high school students reported having been exposed to at least four ACEs.

In response to the survey and at the recommendation of Donna Walsh, director of the Seminole County Health Department, the Seminole County Youth Commission, under the leadership of founder and chair, Dede Schaffner, partnered with the Peace and Justice Institute (PJI) to provide 130 students and club advisors from eleven Seminole County High Schools with

a day-long summit leading to a follow-up action plan with a unified approach on each one of the high school campuses. With a theme of “Better Together,” the 2020 Youth Summit brought participants from Young Men and Women of Excellence, the Gay/Straight Alliance, Student Government Association, and Latinos in Action to foster the conversation necessary to lead change on each campus.

This year’s summit took place on Tuesday, November 9, 2021, at the Rink at Northland Church and explored how we are “Better Together,” addressing the impact of Positive and Adverse Childhood Experiences (PACEs), trauma, and toxic



stress. The Youth Summit encouraged vulnerability and sharing personal stories to connect students and their club advisors with challenges and triumphs related to mental health and cultural competency in the schools. PJI’s Principles For How We Treat Each Other provided a framework for respect and community building and fostered authentic storytelling and dialogue to explore multicultural aspects of identity. Students discussed the application of these Principles to their lives while listening and empathizing with others. Additionally, students were introduced to practice tools for resilience and self-care and explored their personal power to “be the one ” that others need to feel a sense of belonging at school.





“The ACES section was extremely educational and important. Small group discussions were profound. As a teacher, I thank you for creating this program and implementing it with the young people in Seminole County. It’s change in action.”

Dr. Candice Jones, MD, FAAP, Board Certified Pediatrician, presented the workshop, “Why Positive & Adverse Childhood Experiences Matter.” Students learned about the ACEs study, covering a range of emotional topics, with the goal to provide these leaders with communication strategies to guide them and their peers through stressful situations, while creating an underlying culture of respect and support. The “Better Together” team of counselors, under the leadership of Cassandra Palmer, LCSW, Mental Health Program Specialist, was available for support throughout the day.

When asked their thoughts and reactions to the ACEs study and its findings, students had much to say. The new information that connected trauma, behavior, and mental health made sense to them,

and some recommended that all middle school students be required to take this curriculum for school credit.

Focusing on the positive childhood experiences that shape one’s resilience was also an important part of the day. If building resilience is like a fulcrum, students reflected on the “positive side” of the scale that supports resilience in their life. They identified who has been “the one” in their life to make a positive difference, reflected on the positive impact, and considered how they might be “the one” for others.

The daylong workshop also invited students to consider aspects of their multicultural selves to create self-awareness and awareness



of others, the necessary ingredients for a hospitable and welcoming school culture.

Students were provided time to work in groups to synthesize their learning and consider how they would bring it back to their schools. School teams explored how they can “be the ones” to create a hospitable and accountable community at their school to be “better together.” A Gallery Walk allowed them to gain ideas from other schools as they shared their discussion through poster art.

These young leaders were earnest in their desire to build a school culture that welcomes all students. In their feedback, they spoke of the value of collaboration among the clubs at school.





Small group discussions were profound. As a teacher, I thank you for creating this program and implementing it with the young people in Seminole County. It's change in action."

If you are concerned about the emotional health of youth and young adults in Seminole County reach out to Seminole Systems of Care online at bit.ly/Ssoc.

Follow this link to a video created by Patricia Herriger, from Lake Howell High School, that captures the event: bit.ly/3zyCSBj

One participant shared, "I learned that ACEs are more common than I thought and I will use this knowledge to be less judgmental." While another stated, "I learned how important our childhoods are and how certain traumas can greatly affect our lives."

Students expressed how much they valued working in small groups and having the chance to talk about such personal and important topics. The teachers also noted the impact of the day: "The ACEs section was extremely educational and important."



The graphic to the right is a resource from the California Surgeon General's Playbook, and comes from the ACEs Aware initiative led by Dr. Nadine Burke Harris, former California Surgeon General, and Dr. Karen Mark, Medical Director of the Department of Health Care Services. The ACEs Aware initiative has a bold goal to cut ACEs and toxic stress in half in one generation.

Safe, stable, and nurturing relationships and environments in which children feel safe emotionally and physically can protect children's brains and bodies from the harmful effects of stress. Adults can help children be healthier by managing their stress responses and helping children do the same. Healthy nutrition, regular exercise, restful sleep, practicing mindfulness, building social support, and getting mental health care are resilience practices that decrease stress hormones and prevent health problems.

If you want to join the effort to become a trauma informed, healing centered, resilient Central Florida learn more about the CRC Network online at bit.ly/3aYpPP3.



FUND OUR WORK

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NETWORK MEMBERS CALL FOR MORE TRAINING

by Michelle Crozier, PhD, MPH & Lynell Hodge, Ed.D



BACKGROUND

Imagine sitting with a lion in your living room. You are always on alert as you are ready for the lion to attack at any moment of the day. You are constantly stressed and unable to focus. This is what it feels like to grow up in a home where you are exposed to adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). ACEs are traumatic experiences before the age of 18 years old and include parental divorce, incarceration, or death, sexual, physical, or emotional abuse, and parental mental illness or substance abuse (CDC, 2022). This ongoing adversity can change brain wiring that potentially leads to lifelong physical and mental struggles.

The more ACEs someone experiences, the higher their risk of developing a plethora of conditions such as heart disease and autoimmune disorders (Felliti et al., 1998). Sixty percent (60%) of U.S. adults report experiencing at least one ACEs and over 15% have experienced four or more (CDC, 2022). Not only does this impact the quality of life in our society, but it has significant economic costs.

A recent study by Miller et al. (2000) estimated ACEs cost the state of California \$113 billion in excess healthcare spending and early death in just one year. We cannot afford to ignore ACEs; however, we can address this public health crisis through understanding and intervention, which will reduce healthcare spending and lost years of productivity. Effective therapy options exist, and we can teach parents and guardians how to create a supportive and nurturing home environment for children. We can also support initiatives that identify

individuals with ACEs and then connect them with care.

One such initiative exists in our community called the Creating a Resilient Community (CRC) Network and is convened by the Peace and Justice Institute. The network is a multi-sector initiative that includes 430 stakeholders from Orange, Osceola, and Seminole Counties from the public safety, non-profit, health and wellness, government, faith, education, criminal justice, and child welfare sectors. It recognized that many clients, patients, patrons, and employees have either past or ongoing exposures to trauma and needed to understand how to promote greater resilience throughout the Central Florida community. The initial goal of the network was the education of ACEs in the community through film screenings and the annual “CRC: From Trauma to Healing Conference.” As the network enters its fourth year, a survey was sent to members to elucidate what is most needed during its next phase and the findings are detailed in this report.

METHODS & FINDINGS

The intent of this survey was to obtain information about experiences among workers in the public sector related to trauma and trauma-informed practice (TIP) in response to ACEs. TIP emphasizes physical, psychological, and emotional safety for both patients/clients and providers, and helps survivors rebuild a sense of control and empowerment. A 40-item survey was sent to the CRC Network via Qualtrics from July 13, 2021, to September 17, 2021. Of the 309 CRC

DEMOGRAPHICS	Number	Percent
RACE	N	%
Asian	1	<1
Black or African American	26	21
White	84	68
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	1	<1
Multi-racial	2	<1
Not Listed	7	5
Prefer Not to Answer	4	3
ETHNICITY		
Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish Origin	23	18
Not Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish Origin	96	77
Prefer Not to Answer	6	5
GENDER		
Female	103	83
Male	16	13
Genderqueer/Gender Non-Conforming/Non-Binary	1	<1
Prefer Not to Answer	5	4

Figure 1. Table 1. Demographics of CRC Network. This figure shows the demographics of participants who responded to the survey.

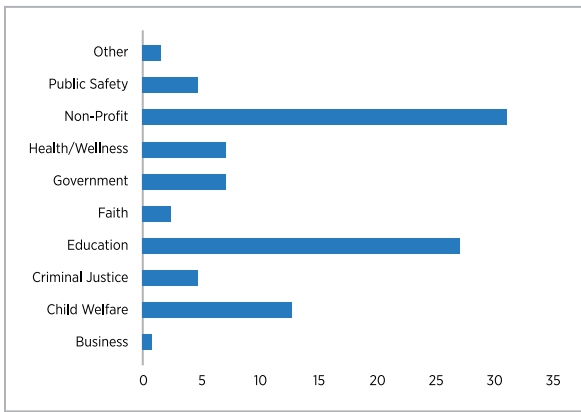


Figure 2. Bar Chart 1. Sector representation. Percentage of CRC Network members represented in the survey by sector.

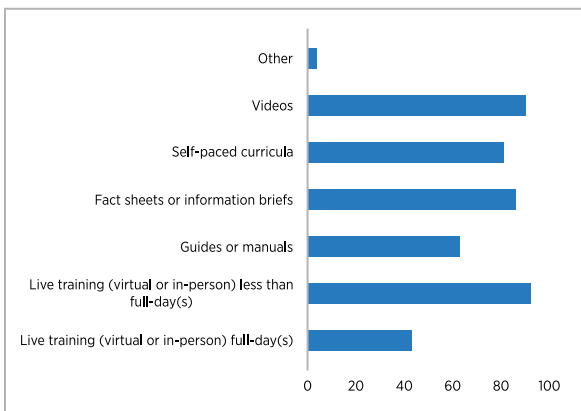


Figure 3. Bar Chart 2. Training Types. This figure shows the types of training the CRC survey respondents prefer to attend. Each bar is the total number of respondents choosing the training type.

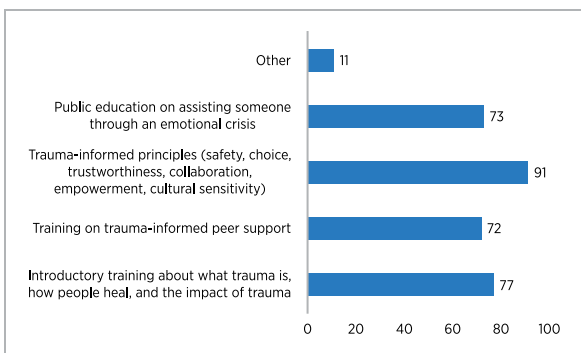


Figure 4. Bar Chart 3. Training Needs. This figure shows the training needs of the CRC survey respondents. Each bar is the total number of respondents choosing that training need.

Network members at that time, a total of 125 (40%) responded.

As seen in Table 1, respondents were primarily female (n=103, 83%) and white (n=84, 68%), and 31% (n=39) identified with the non-profit sector (Bar Chart 1). An analysis of the survey found that 88% (n=109) of respondents identified ACEs and TIP Training as an important priority, with a particular interest in half-day training (n=92) as illustrated in Bar Chart 2.

Further, when examining specific types of training by sector, 56% (n=5) of sectors identified live training as less than a full-day and videos as the most desired training methods. However, Public Safety equally endorsed full-day live training, and Government equally endorsed fact sheets and information briefs. Health and Wellness identified fact sheets or information briefs as the preferred type of training. Faith chose self-paced curricula equally to half-day live training, and Business was interested in guides or manuals, self-paced curricula, or videos.

DISCUSSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

The majority of CRC Network sectors identified a need for further training on TIP, including safety, choice, trustworthiness, collaboration, empowerment, and cultural sensitivity, and that half-day live training or videos are the most desired mechanisms. One or two sectors diverged slightly from the overall findings, which illustrates the diverse work environments represented across the network and highlights the importance of sector-specific engagement. The network recognized this need and formalized sector groups in 2021. Network members identified a

primary affiliation, individuals volunteered as sector leads, and each sector identified initial goals for their areas with expected completion by the 2022 annual conference. Most sectors developed at least one goal centered around training, which further illustrates the need to better understand the knowledge gaps among the professionals in each sector and the communities they serve. Sector-specific survey results will be shared with group leaders to help inform later goals, but future sector-specific surveys could help further elucidate the training requirements among each group. This work is even more important in our community as we heal from the COVID-19 pandemic. It was a generation-defining event, and the disruption to our normal lives was unprecedented. Social isolation worries about the economy, the health of our families, and job loss compounded the stress we already experienced. Many of us are returning to life as we know it, but the impact of these stresses will be felt for years. The continued work of the CRC Network is vital to our recovery.

CONCLUSION

In its next phase, the CRC Network should emphasize identifying or developing cross-sector training on TIP and delivering it to members. Further, each sector should integrate training on both positive and adverse childhood events (PACES) as a main goal and customize training materials to meet the needs of their constituents. They should also develop or identify training courses that meet additional sector-specific needs identified in the survey. To this end, each sector should survey its members to understand more specific needs than identified in the general network survey.

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No Visible Bruises:

Author Rachel Louise Snyder
Addresses Valencia College and Central
Florida About Domestic Violence.

by Taylor Graham

Valencia College Student & Valencia Voice Staff Member

"The single most important thing we can do to address domestic violence is connecting our systems. This is why I'm so happy that there are community members out here today. The jurisdictions I have seen, traveled, and spoken to all over the country that have done this most successfully are the ones who have knocked down bureaucratic barriers."

The Peace and Justice Institute (PJI) at Valencia College hosted their annual Conversation on Justice Conference from January 24–27, 2022. The four-day virtual conference reported over 1,700 attendees with discussions regarding the environment, racial inequality, immigration, gender stereotypes, LGBTQ+ topics, and domestic violence.

The keynote event with Rachel Louise Snyder, the author of *No Visible Bruises: What We Don't Know About Domestic Violence Can Kill Us*, occurred Wednesday morning and once more later that day, preceding a panel discussion via Zoom.

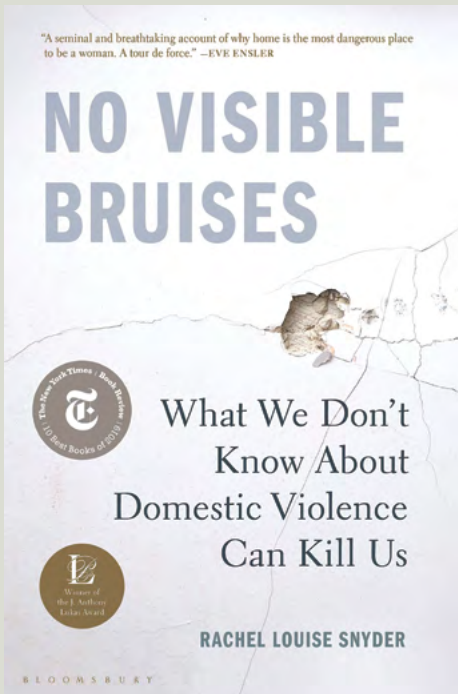
At the start of the evening presentation, Peace and Justice Institute Director Rachel C. Allen recognized Patty Burton, the Executive Director of Retail Banking at JPMorgan Chase & Co. Burton expressed how proud the banking company is to be a sponsor of COJ and part of the effort to build a more resilient community.

Snyder's keynote address discussed her background on domestic violence and the inception of her book.

"If a feminist who had traveled the world and done all of these human rights stories knew domestic violence was a backdrop — if someone like me could have these blinders on to all these myths and misunderstand this so profoundly — it meant that the system was failing. But I could do something about it, and my book is an attempt [...] to try to right the wrongs of the system that I am involved in," explained the American University professor.

Snyder proceeded to describe the need for informal systems such as family, and formal systems such as education, healthcare, law enforcement, and judiciary, to make connections as they strive to recognize and intervene in domestic violence.

"The single most important thing we can do to address domestic violence is connecting our systems. This is why



Rachel Louise Snyder's book *No Visible Bruises: What We Don't Know About Domestic Violence Can Kill Us* is available for purchase through sites like Amazon where it receives 4.7 stars out of 5 among customer reviews and has won numerous awards since its publication in 2019.

I'm so happy that there are community members out here today. The jurisdictions I have seen, traveled, and spoken to all over the country that have done this most successfully are the ones who have knocked down bureaucratic barriers," said Snyder.

Following her remarks, community panelists Michelle Sperzel, the CEO for Harbor House of Central Florida; Monique Worrell, the State Attorney of the Ninth Judicial Circuit Court for Florida; and Teresa Sprague, a Homicide Detective for the Orlando Police Department, joined the discussion.

Moderator Matthew Peddie, the host of WMFE's Intersection and Assistant News Director at WMFE 90.7 News, asked the local leaders for their perspectives on working alongside one another when addressing domestic violence in Central Florida.

"I think the coordination between all of the partners is extremely important.

Particularly, when you're dealing with people in these types of situations, you have to provide them with reassurance in whichever way you can," answered Worrell.

This article was first published in the Valencia Voice, a student publication. You can find that article here: bit.ly/NVBRLS

Look for and additional opportunity to meet Rachel Loise Snyder virtually in the fall when the community comes together again to address domestic violence.

CONGRATULATIONS!

2021-2022

The following faculty members have completed the Peace and Justice Practitioner Certificate:

Andi Michaels **Marlene Gillies**
Angelina Cruz **Mayra Holzer**
Dan Mullins **Meera Ravikumar**
Doug Kern **Michael Moniz**
Kim Brewster **Sharon Shenton**
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Marci Dial **Suzanne Green**

The Peace and Justice Practitioner Certificate is designed to support faculty members as they develop and/or refine their practice of peace and justice pedagogy for deeper learning in an inclusive environment. The program supports all faculty members to integrate the PJI Principles and Commitments into their teaching practice.

The following students have completed the Peace and Justice Distinction Program:

Bethany Marie Castillo **Maria Landron**
Gabriela Chediak **Miguel E. Bermudez**
Joel Cuba
Leah Basaria
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The Peace and Justice Distinction offers an opportunity for a co-curricular focus in peace and justice in order for students to advance their personal and professional development. Through the Distinction program, the student will gain awareness, garner interest, and seek additional learning opportunities in peace and justice.

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All People. All Voices. All Matter.

VALENCIA COLLEGE

Leah Basaria

*2021-2022 Mary S. Collier Distinguished Graduate,
Jack Kent Cooke Scholar, & PJI Distinction Honoree*



"Throughout my two and a half years at Valencia, I had the good fortune of becoming a part of several college clubs and communities. Each one holds tremendous value in my heart, but the organization that has contributed most to my growth is the Peace and Justice Institute.

The moment the PJI Principles were introduced to me, I found my perfect creed. In completing the PJI Distinction, I had the opportunity to gain crucial insights at Courageous Conversation events. I have been deeply impacted by the Creating a Resilient Community speakers and experiences shared. I have goals of revolutionizing mental health education, intervention, and accessibility. The Peace and Justice Institute gave me so many of the tools I will need to accomplish my dreams."

Leah Basaria

Resolving Conflicts Through Peace Studies Knowledge

by Haley Puckett

Valencia College Peace Studies Student

“I believe using my Peace Studies knowledge will prepare me to resolve global conflicts and promote peace in my future political career.”

This semester, I took the Peace Studies course with Professor Paul Chapman to have a better understanding of peace and conflict. Learning to resolve conflict peacefully began with the ‘Do peace philosophies really work?’ assignment. In the video shown to the class, I saw the protest led by Mahatma Gandhi in India and the civil rights sit-in guided by John Lewis, Diane Nash, and others in Nashville. These leaders used nonviolent civil disobedience, self-discipline and self-restraint, conditioning themselves from using the fight or flight instinct to model peaceful resistance. Self-restraint and self-discipline are important skills in conflict resolution. If I do not remain composed and resort to the fight instinct, I will become frustrated and

lash out at those involved. If I respond to the flight instinct by leaving, it will deepen the tension and take longer for the conflict to end.

I also learned how to resolve conflict by using the PJI Principles of Suspending Judgment, Listening Deeply, and Respecting Silence. Suspending Judgment is listening to what the other person is saying before jumping to judgment. Listening Deeply is intently listening to the person who is speaking and creating a balance of listening, reflecting on what you heard, speaking about what you heard, and acting on it. Respecting Silence is taking time to reflect and think about what you heard, instead of immediately filling the space with words. In politics, if I find myself in

the middle of a disagreement or on one side arguing over a certain point of view, I will speak to both sides. I will suspend judgment, listen to what the parties are saying, ask questions, and reflect on what they said after they are finished, while also practicing self-restraint. Then I will pull information from the discussions and put together a plan to resolve the conflict fairly that can be accepted by both sides.

Often there are inflexible positions in a conflict. No matter how much the sides engage with each other the conflict will not disappear and may get worse. It is better to resolve a conflict with a compromise that can allow both parties to coexist in a more peaceful world without a violent engagement occurring.

I believe following PJI’s Principles and using my Peace Studies knowledge will prepare me to resolve conflict and promote peaceful outcomes in my future political career.





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.

The Principles For How We Treat Each Other are available for download on our website:




bit.ly/PJIPrinciples

The background of the page is decorated with various tropical illustrations. In the top left, there are dark green palm fronds. To their right are light blue leaves with small dark spots and a yellow flower with many thin petals. In the top right, there are blue leaves and orange and red diagonal stripes. On the left side, there are blue leaves with black dots. At the bottom, there are large red and orange shapes, possibly representing a sunset or a large flower, and a dark green leaf with light blue veins.

THE POWER OF THE QUESTION

by Michele Lima & Mollie McLaughlin
Valencia College Professors of Speech

Practice asking honest and open questions.
A great question is ambiguous, personal and
provokes anxiety.



For many of us striving to use the Peace and Justice Institute's Principles in our everyday lives, knowing how to ask an honest and open question is one of the most challenging skills we work on to nurture relationships.

When developing the intention to ask honest and open questions, it helps to get clear about what is being asked and to identify for whom this Principle is being practiced. What does it mean to ask such a question and who am I serving by asking it? The purpose is to create a deep connection so individuals are present, speak their minds, and bring inner wisdom to the conversation.

An honest and open question is ambiguous, one that Parker Palmer says we cannot possibly ask while thinking, "I know the right answer to this question, and I hope they will give it to me." Ambiguous questions, such as "What do you see as most important?" or "What did you learn along the way?" do not imply a preferred answer and leave the respondent a safe space to answer with the words most true for them. Questions like these are very personal because they evoke the individual's learning gained from experience and reflection.

Honest and open questions may provoke anxiety because they do not imply a predictable answer. Asking these questions elicits a candid reply and becomes an exercise in inspiring relational trust.

Asking honest and open questions places us in a position of responsibility to listen deeply and affirm others when they share what is authentic to them.

If we are receptive to the complex parts or remain curious during the parts of an answer that do not fit our narrative, we grow relational muscles. Through this process, we gain the respect of becoming empathetic listeners.

Asking honest and open questions places us in a position of responsibility to listen deeply and affirm others when they share what is authentic to them. We are mindful of how the nature of our questions can support a further turn to wonder and express our humility as we detach from judging the quality, quantity, or presence of timely answers. All the Principles work in tandem with honest and open questions. When practiced together, the Principles For How We Treat Each Other offer a pathway to awareness and understanding that will guide us to peace and justice in our relationships.

HOWARD ZINN, THEATRE, & VALENCIA'S VOICES OF DISSENT

by Rob Urbinati

Like many people, I was stunned when I first read Howard Zinn's "A People's History of the United States." This transformative work recounted our country's struggles for equality from the point of view of those left out of most history books - Native Americans, suffragists, factory workers, African Americans, immigrant laborers, gay rights activists, and other marginalized groups.

Years later, I had written and directed plays that were produced by the Culture Project in New York City, known for its commitment to socially conscious theatre and human rights. One day, I received a call from Allan Buchman, the theatre's Artistic Director, informing me that he had just spoken with Howard Zinn, who was interested in having a writer turn his book, *Voices of A People's History of the United States* into a play. *Voices of a People's History...*, edited by Zinn and

Anthony Arno, is the "primary source companion piece" to Zinn's seminal text.

Needless to say, I was eager to meet Zinn, discuss his vision for the play, and try to persuade him that I was the right person to write it. At lunch, I was surprised by his agreeable, folksy manner - not at all the fiery dissident one would expect from his books and speeches. I remember that he chatted amiably about how much he liked watching the Nature Channel. It was clear from this first meeting that he was open to suggestions about how his dense work of non-fiction could be made theatrical. We hit it off, and I was commissioned by the Culture Project to write the play. I also met with Arno, who provided a list of "Voices" he felt would be essential for the play.

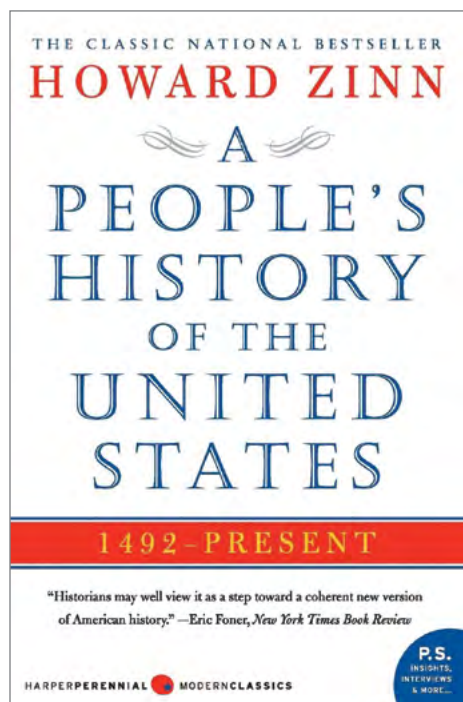
So, I went to Paris (!), to Boulevard Montparnasse, the very spot where many American expatriates had written their famous works in the 1920s and began to sketch out ideas for how to shape the play. The book is chronological, divided into sections such as The American Revolution, The Early Women's Movement, etc. At first, I thought it might be useful to take a different approach, and structure the play thematically, but there was something well-grounded in starting at the beginning of

this country's history, and tracing how the same struggles have evolved over the years.

The first task was selecting who to include, as there were many compelling Voices to choose from in the book. Just as I would with writing any play, I looked for a variety - not only regarding the issues discussed, but the distinct cadences the individual Voices used when writing or speaking. I wanted audiences to experience the sublime rhetorical flourishes of Frederick Douglass' famous 4th of July speech contrasted with the plain, colloquial speech of Cindy Sheehan who camped outside George Bush's Texas ranch.

Many of the articles and speeches in the book were lengthy. I hoped to include as many Voices as possible, so once they were selected, the next task was editing. These articulate activists did not waste words, so this proved to be a long, painstaking task. But with input from Arno, and through multiple drafts, I was able to cut the Voices down to their core points.

I also felt strongly that the piece would be more theatrical if I spliced various Voices together, as if the speakers were in conversation. At times, I did this with people who spoke on the same issue and in the same vernacular, such as women in the Labor movement in the 1930s. At other times, the splicing heightened the contrast between the idioms, for example, the formal approach of Yolanda Huet-Vaughn's prepared remarks about her resistance to the Gulf War with June Jordan's sinewy, hallucinogenic poetry on the same subject.





Voices of A People's History contained song lyrics, and I felt that including songs in the play would provide a vibrant counterpoint to the many spoken Voices.

I confess that Zinn and Arnove did not initially approve of splicing speeches or including songs. I made my case, and after a few workshops of early drafts, they came to accept these ideas, to a degree, although it was clear that Howard would have preferred that none of the Voices were sung, spliced, or even edited. Although he was a giving collaborator and deferred to my suggestions, I wanted him to be completely satisfied with the production, so I pulled back on some of the splicing and singing.

Of course, it was essential for the cast to be diverse, which was no problem in New York City. We did not want the actors to attempt to imitate the individuals to whom they were giving voice and felt strongly that there was no need to distribute the roles “authentically” according to race and gender. So with the exception of certain “iconic” figures, Black women played

So many vital issues are facing Americans today, and so many courageous people are fighting to make things right. I want to honor these brave and brilliant individuals with a new play of their own.

white men and so on. This choice contributed to the overall theatricality of the premiere production.

We were well aware that with the play, (which we decided to call “Rebel Voices” after Zinn’s dedication in the book, “To the next generation of Rebel Voices”), we would be preaching to the choir, and that would likely draw criticism. We welcomed it. We weren’t trying to win anyone over. We wanted to celebrate the activist community. Our stated goal was to preach to the choir, and in performance at the Culture Project, with this “choir” assembled, responding to the Voices and singing along with the songs, there was a powerful and uplifting sense of solidarity.

The premiere production had a “rotating cast,” which included such celebrated activists as Staceyann Chin, Steve Earle, Danny Glover, Rich Robinson of The Black Crowes, Lili Taylor, and Wallace Shawn. Personally, I was thrilled when Howard and Anthony told me they were proud of the production. On opening night in the green room, they signed an agreement that gave me, moving forward, complete rights to revise and adapt the play as I saw fit without their input or permission. This exceedingly generous offer meant that the play was mine.

As the years passed, it became essential to add the Voices of more recent radicals, speaking out on critical contemporary



issues. This had always been Howard and Anthony’s wish, in fact, Arnové has continued to add Voices for each new edition of the “Voices of a People’s History of the United States.”

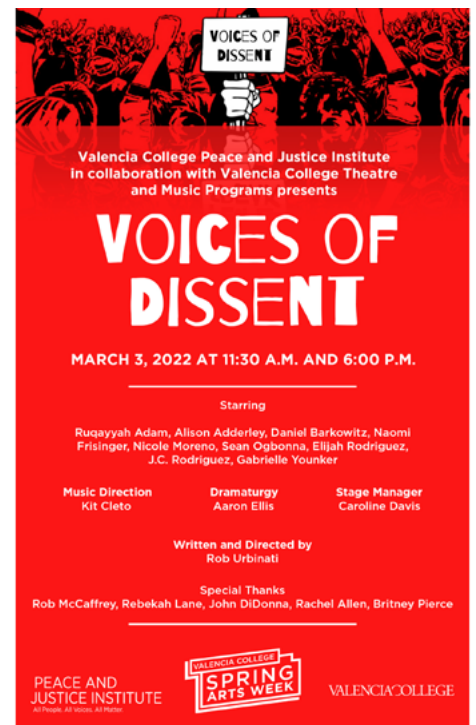
Meanwhile, after I received an email from someone asking if he could read a perusal copy of my play about “Confederate heroes,” I thought the time had come to change the title. The premiere production of the play with the new title, “Voices of Dissent” was presented by the Peace and Justice Institute at Valencia College in March 2022, which I directed. Working with students, faculty, and staff was a completely satisfying and deeply moving experience. I cannot thank Rachel C. Allen enough for the opportunity.

In rehearsal for the Valencia production, it became clear that the play was now “top heavy” with recent Voices, because every time a new Voice was added, an earlier Voice needed to be eliminated. It occurred to me that the time had come to create a work that would eliminate the earlier

Voices entirely and focus directly on contemporary issues. “Voices of Dissent,” will always exist, but I have begun work on a sequel, “21st Century Voices of Dissent.” So many vital issues are facing Americans today, and so many courageous people are fighting to make things right. I want to honor these brave and brilliant individuals with a new play of their own.

The live theatrical production of Voices of Dissent was held on Valencia’s East Campus as a featured Spring Arts Week event. The cast and crew included Valencia College students, administrators, and faculty (pictured above with director, Rob Urbinati, front center).

The production was directed by Rob Urbinati, a freelance director and writer, and Director of New Play Development at Queens Theatre, where he curates New American Voices (formerly Immigrant Voices Project), a new play program that develops plays by writers who represent the diverse demographics of New York City.



Peace and Justice Institute and the School of Public Safety Collaborate to Build a More Resilient Community

by Dr. Jeffrey Goltz

Executive Dean of the Valencia College School of Public Safety

After the killing of Trayvon Martin in 2012, the Valencia College School of Public Safety (SPS) began collaborating with the Peace and Justice Institute (PJI) when PJI Director Rachel C. Allen and the PJI team engaged the Sanford community for healing and began to prepare one of its signature events, Orlando Speaks, dialogues with the Orlando Police Department and the community. In 2017, the collaboration heightened when the SPS worked closely with PJI to coordinate training for supervisors and managers at the Orlando Fire Department, hosted at the SPS campus. Two years later, the PJI and SPS bond was profoundly strengthened. In 2019, Rachel C. Allen invited the SPS to join the Creating a Resilient Community (CRC) Network and participate in the 1st Annual Creating a Resilient Community: From Trauma to Healing Conference. Dr. Jeff Goltz, SPS Executive Dean, gladly accepted both invitations and the SPS eagerly engaged the public safety sector in the important community work to transform our region into one of prevention, hope, healing, and resilience for all.

This mission was accelerated in June 2020. Within a week after the killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota, Dr. Sandy Shugart, retired Valencia College

President, communicated a “call to action” for the college as social conflict and protests polarized the nation and strong messages to reform and “defund the police” were voiced in many communities. A month later he met with several Central Florida law enforcement leaders to discuss ways to strengthen relationships between the community and law enforcement, and to solicit their training needs. After this deep conversation, Dr. Shugart suggested the SPS and PJI assemble a team with the community to seek recommendations to bring fundamental change in training and education for law enforcement officers served at Valencia College. He wanted Valencia to be very responsive and offer contemporary training and education for local law enforcement officers to promote equitable and just policing practices at the SPS.

In September 2020, Rachel C. Allen and Dr. Jeff Goltz brought the thirty-member Equitable and Just Policing Education and Training Task Force together.

The goal of the task force was to identify deficits in the curriculum and to look beyond Community Policing to change the occupational culture of law enforcement in Central Florida and define non-policing alternatives and social roles, engage in



Equitable and Just Policing Education and Training Task Force

Community Members:

Anna Eskamani, *Florida House of Representatives, 47th District* • Tony Ortiz, *City of Orlando, Commissioner, District 2* • Dr. Jacinta Gau, *University of Central Florida, Associate Professor Criminal Justice* • Dr. Giorgina Pinedo-Rolon, *City of Orlando, Multicultural Affairs* • Andrew Thomas, *City of Sanford* • Amanda Carlson, *OCPS, East River H.S. First Responders Program* • Erin Martin, *Aspire Health* • Lindsey Phillips, *Devereux* • Jarvis Wheeler, *Children's Home Society* • Christopher Cuevas, *QLatinex* • Glenton Gilzean, *Central Florida Urban League* • Paula Hoisington, *Chair, Central Florida Urban League Board* • Fatima Sadaf Saied, *Muslim's Women Organization* • Blu Bailey, *The Write*

Law Enforcement & Corrections Members:

Dave Ogden, *Chief, Windermere Police Department* • Mark Canty, *Undersheriff, Orange County Sheriff's Office* • Malik Muhammed, *Major, Orange County Corrections* • Todd Gardiner, *Captain, Orange County Sheriff's Office* • Tom Woodhall, *Captain, Orlando Police Department* • Kevlon Kirkpatrick, *Master Police Officer, Orlando Police Department* • Walter Melton, *Police Officer, Orlando Police Department, Law Enforcement Academy Instructor*

Valencia College Members:

Rachel C. Allen, *Director, Peace and Justice Institute* • Dr. Jeffrey Goltz, *Executive Dean, School of Public Safety* • Dr. James McDonald – *Executive Director, Bachelor of Applied Science Business and Organizational Leadership* • Will Jefferson, *Community Manager, Peace and Justice Institute* • Rob Pigman, *Director, Criminal Justice Institute* • Lauren Sykes, *Chair, Faculty, Criminal Justice A.S. Program* • Rudy Darden, *Faculty, English, Downtown Campus* • Dan Diehl, *Director, Fire Science A.S. Program* • Jim White, *Director, Fire Training Programs*

public health-centered approaches to urban and social problems and implement contemporary training to regional police officers. Most important, as a convener of many voices and experts, Valencia College wanted to find solutions to strengthen the Central Florida community through its role in training and education for the police. To do this vital work effectively, the task force first established “design principles” that focused on serving those who have been racially and economically marginalized and disproportionately impacted by the criminal justice system, offered a better understanding of “trauma-sensitive” practices, identified implicit biases and the development of emotional literacy and cultural awareness, and enhanced the trust between the community and law enforcement.

The task force met each month, from September 2020 through February 2021, and discussed key tenets and foundational principles in policing, reviewed articles and reports, and participated in workshops. Rachel C. Allen and Paula Hoisington from the Central Florida Urban League coordinated a “Community Perspectives and Police Encounters” workshop that offered testimonials about negative encounters with law enforcement from task force members and other community members. The intent of the workshop was to understand the value of testimony, to build empathy and understanding of the impact each encounter has on the citizen, officer, and the community. Specifically, how an officer’s approach affects the resolution of the encounter, which leaves an everlasting impression on the citizen.

In another workshop, Dr. Randy Nelson, Director of the Center for Law and Social Justice at Bethune Cookman University, explained the social contract theory and the power of perception in his presentation, “Effective Community Engagement Through Two-Way Accountability.” He offered a discussion of the rights and responsibilities of citizens in society and highlighted the disparities in opinions on how law enforcement applies different standards across various communities. Dr. Jacinta Gau, Associate Professor in the Department of Criminal Justice at the University of Central Florida, provided definitions and explained the importance of police legitimacy and procedural justice.

Throughout their work, the task force identified several items they considered important in creating a new paradigm in public safety training and education at the SPS and even adopted a “working theory” that captured the mission of their work: Policing is what the community experiences.

In February 2021, the task force made ten recommendations in three defined areas: 1) Law Enforcement Academy Training, 2) Community Collaboration and Partnerships, and 3) Workforce Diversity and Wellness. These areas aimed to define non-policing alternatives and social roles, proposed





engagement in mental health-centered approaches to urban and social problems, suggested contemporary training to regional officers, and emphasized the importance of officer wellness. Recommendations included regional expansion of partnerships between law enforcement and behavioral health workers, a strategy to implement training and education on understanding social problems through the “trauma-informed” lens of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and Resiliency, and training on emotional literacy and cultural awareness to promote equitable and just policing practices that increase trust in the police among historically marginalized communities.

The SPS selected exceptional ambassadors from PJI to move this work forward, and the recommendations were implemented immediately. Rob Pigman, Director of the Criminal Justice Institute at the SPS, ushered in a new era of training for regional law enforcement officers that included fair and impartial policing, de-escalation, and racial and emotional intelligence (RITE Academy). This training is now offered as advanced training to officers, and in leadership development for public safety supervisors and managers. In the summer of 2021, the SPS and PJI assembled a work team to review the police academy curriculum for fair and impartial content recommended by the task force. This review offered more recommendations to strengthen the current police academy curriculum. Dr. Jeff Goltz and ambassadors, Lauren Sykes, PJI leader and West Campus Criminal Justice Chair, and Kevlon Kirkpatrick, PJI facilitator and retired Orlando Police officer, worked closely together, in

partnership with PJI and the CRC Network to build curriculum, training, and practices that are steeped in Neuroscience, Epigenetics, ACEs and Resiliency (N.E.A.R.).

This exceptional college and community initiative is now included in Valencia College’s Equity Plan, and overall, the SPS is moving this important work forward into the distant future with tremendous motivation. Since the fall of 2021, Lauren Sykes has been assigned to the SPS on a faculty fellowship to lead many SPS efforts. Without a doubt, the PJI and SPS have led a very progressive public safety strategy within the CRC Network to build a more resilient community in Central Florida.

Dr. Goltz was born in Wisconsin and served four years in the U.S. Air Force. In 1988 he was hired by the Orlando Police Department and retired as a Captain in 2008, after 20 years of public service and numerous assignments throughout the department. Upon his retirement, he was hired by Valencia College and served as the Director of the Criminal Justice Institute. In 2014 he was promoted to the Executive Dean of the School of Public Safety at Valencia College and currently serves as the public safety lead in the Creating a Resilient Community Network (CRC) in Central Florida. In 2006, Dr. Goltz completed a Ph.D. in Public Affairs from the University of Central Florida. His interests are the strategic growth and leadership philosophy in public affairs and public safety training and education. He has published three books in the area of higher education leadership and human trafficking, and many journal articles in his field.

PEACE NEWS

Chef Jose Andres & World Central Kitchen Provide Aid to Ukrainians

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has left millions displaced, hungry and in desperate need of help. Once again, José Andrés and World Central Kitchen have come to the rescue during a crisis, providing 5 million meals to Ukraine's refugees and to those still suffering within the country's borders. (The latter group accounts for nearly half of the total meals served.)

"With one plate of food at a time, we may not end this war," said Andrés in a tweet. "But at the very least we are going to make sure that people don't suffer more." From the first moments of the war, WCK was serving warm meals at a 24-hour border crossing in southern Poland, quickly expanding to eight crossings along the Polish border. The hunger-relief organization now operates at 41 crossings on Ukraine's border, with a warehouse and field kitchen in Przemyśl, Poland.

Source: [*Wine Spectator*](#)



Poinciana Campus Solar Energy Project Shines Light on Valencia's Sustainability Future

Thanks to the efforts of U.S Congressman Darren Soto, Valencia College has been awarded a \$500,000 grant to support Valencia's commitment to creating a solar energy system at our Poinciana Campus.

The grant, alongside Valencia's financial contributions, will be utilized to install a 292 kW Solar Photovoltaic (PV) system on the rooftops of the Poinciana Campus. The planned PV system will meet as much as 40% of the energy needed to operate the campus in Poinciana and will play a positive role in preserving our local environment.

Source: [*The Grove*](#)



Singing, and Signing, Beethoven's 'Fidelio' in Los Angeles

"DJ Kurs has been the artistic director of the Deaf West Theater, a theater company created in Los Angeles by deaf actors, for the past 10 years. But he had never seen the Los Angeles Philharmonic or been to the Walt Disney Concert Hall, its renowned home, even though he grew up in Southern California.

He will finally be there leading seven actors from Deaf West in an innovative production of "Fidelio," Beethoven's opera about the rescue of a political prisoner, in a collaboration with a cast of singers and the Los Angeles Philharmonic. The actors — along with a chorus from Venezuela whose members are deaf or hard of hearing and will also be signing — will be center stage on opening night expressively enacting the lone opera of a composer who had progressive hearing loss while writing masterpiece after masterpiece."

Source: [*New York Times*](#)



CELEBRATING PEACE NEWS LOCALLY, NATIONALLY, AND INTERNATIONALLY.



More Nations Strengthened LGBTQ+ Rights in 2021

In 2021 more nations introduced legislation to tackle discrimination against the LGBTQ+ community, although there's much work to do. Switzerland said 'yes' to same-sex marriages; Canada passed a bill to ban conversion therapy; Montenegro registered its first same-sex partnership; and Botswana upheld a ruling decriminalising homosexuality, rejecting a government appeal to overturn the law. Elsewhere, members of the LGBTQ+ community rose to prominence in politics. Tessa Ganserer and Nyke Slawik became the first transgender women to win parliamentary seats in Germany; Eduardo Leite became Brazil's first openly gay governor; and Sarah McBride was sworn in as the first transgender US state senator.

Source: [Positive.News](#)



JPMorgan Chase & Microsoft Among Growing Number of Companies Turning to Neurodiverse Workers to Help Meet Need for Talent

Workers with autism, dyslexia, ADHD, Tourette's syndrome, and other learning and mental health differences make up the neurodiverse population. An increasing number of companies are integrating neurodiverse people into the workplace as they recognize their growing numbers and unique skills. This huge pool of neurodiverse talent, with unemployment rates nearing 30% to 40% according to some estimates, is now being tapped by companies across a host of industries. JPMorgan Chase, Microsoft, SAP, Hilton, and EY are just a few of the organizations that have specific programs in place to interview, hire, and onboard neurodiverse workers

Source: [CNBC](#)



White House, Native Leaders Discuss Indigenous Sacred Sites

The White House wants to increase protection of and access to Indigenous sacred sites. The White House Council on Native American Affairs (WHCNA) held a listening session with Native leaders to hear feedback on how to improve the land stewardship and preservation of sacred sites across Indian Country. The listening session was a follow up to an initiative launched last November by Department of the Interior Secretary Deb Haaland. Following the Tribal Nations Summit last fall, eight federal agencies signed a Memorandum of Understanding, committing themselves to consulting with Native American, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian tribes to improve the protection of Indigenous sacred sites.

Source: [Native News Online](#)

PRESERVING *The City Beautiful*

Create Harmony with Nature By Becoming Backyard Wildlife Certified

by Emilie Buckley

Valencia College Lake Nona Campus Librarian & PJI Campus Coordinator

Like many during the COVID-19 lockdown, I had the opportunity to spend significantly more time at home. Living in a small older home, in Orlando's Audubon Park neighborhood, my work from home space was on the back patio. While inconvenient at first, it allowed me to observe local wildlife with a new sense of appreciation. Over time, I noticed the daily routines of hawks, made friends with anoles, and later in the evening, have gotten to know our local bat colony and the great horned owl that keeps rats at bay.

Stopping to observe the patterns of my backyard friends, I realized that I needed to take steps to help them flourish. The National Wildlife Federation backyard wildlife certification program provides guidance for creating green spaces or balconies that allow us to live harmoniously with nature. To participate, residents need to provide the essentials needed for wildlife to thrive, including food (bird feeder, butterfly plants, etc.), water (birdbath or decorative pond), cover (fallen branches, bird, or bee houses), and places to raise young such as mature landscaping.

It's our duty as Orlando residents to think beyond ourselves and act as stewards of the land. The City of Orlando has an impressive list of sustainability options available to homeowners. Orlando residents can visit the city's Office of Sustainability and Resilience website to request environmentally friendly features for their yards such as composters, Florida-

friendly garden consultation, and free shade trees.

As a new homeowner, my first instinct was to try and achieve a picture-perfect lawn; fertilizing to destroy weeds and clearing out decades of brush from behind the shed. Taking the time to observe, I realized that the weeds weren't problems at all, they were wildflowers, hosting bees and other pollinators necessary to sustain our ecosystem. "Wildflowers, Not Weeds" became my yard work motto. Before long, I was mowing around the patches of white and yellow flowers and researching where to buy Florida native plants.

Making small, affordable changes impacts not just our properties, but our outlook on wildlife within the community. As more people flock to the state, it's important to remember that it's the responsibility of every resident to maintain what makes the state so special. After all, the Orlando city motto is, "The City Beautiful," let's all do our part to keep it that way.

Learn more about creating a National Wildlife Foundation certified yard here: [nwf.org/CERTIFY](https://www.nwf.org/CERTIFY)

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PJI partners with Wells Fargo to host a listening session on Advancing Racial Equity In Our Community.