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ALL PEOPLE. ALL VOICES. ALL MATTER.

Lateral Thinking for Social Change

I invite you to complete a visual brain teaser using linear thinking, the logical, sequential way to get from A to B. Then use lateral thinking, a creative, not immediately apparent, and “out of the box” way to get from A to B.



Both linear and lateral thinking are essential to effect social change. Through the imaginative lens of lateral thinking, the intent is to consider the causes of social injustice from multiple perspectives and generate unexpected solutions. “Creativity involves breaking out of established patterns in order to look at things in a different way,” said Edward de Bono, the Maltese physician, psychologist, author, inventor, and philosopher, who originated the term lateral thinking.

Lateral thinking has helped the Peace and Justice Institute (PJI) look at peace and justice issues in “out of the box” ways to advance innovative training and programs. Understanding peace and justice through the science of trauma by learning brain science and how the brain responds to adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) is an example of how this thinking has impacted PJI’s work.

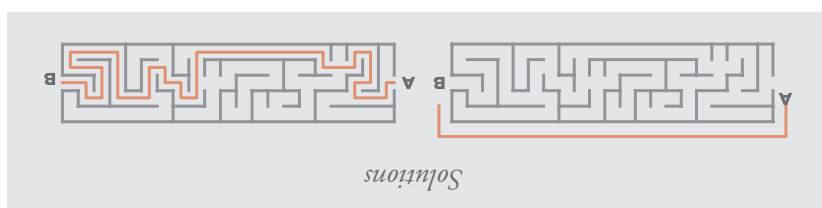
The science of trauma teaches that learning and intelligence decline when an individual experiences stress. To realize the culture of

peace and strengthen a community’s resilience depends on its members’ physical and mental well-being. When ACEs are identified and understood, healing and treatment may begin, empathy can develop, and the chance of violence against self and others diminishes.

This research became a focus of the PJI team’s continuous professional development. An exceptional though unanticipated outcome of the learning is a PJI-led Positive and Adverse Childhood Experiences (PACES) collective impact movement that began with a now annual Creating a Resilient Community (CRC) conference starting in 2019 with 500 participants. A further evolution is the CRC Network, with over 500 individuals and 250 organizations from diverse community sectors working together to foster prevention, hope, trauma-informed healing, and resilience in Central Florida. What started as curiosity about brain science has opened up new possibilities for community partnerships to address peace and justice issues.

PJI will continue to ask and explore answers to “why things are the way they are” and “what might be,” guided by the Principles for How We Treat Each Other, a catalyst for lateral thinking.

PJI Advisory Council Chair Sumner Hutchinson III, asked Chair-Emerita, Patricia Ambinder, to write his letter for this issue of the Journal.



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FEATURES

- 6. The Intersection of Peacebuilding and Addressing Trauma in Our Community
- 10. Race, Equality, Equity and Inclusion: The City of Sanford Unites for Change
- 16. PJI Through the Years
- 18. The Future of Reproductive Rights in Post Roe v. Wade America
- 20. Reflecting with Aida Diaz: An Interview with One of the Co-Founders of PJI
- 22. Advancing Racial Equity in Our Communities: Black Leaders' Perspectives on the State of Equity in Philanthropy
- 24. We Belong Here
- 26. Meditation Page
- 28. Partnership for the Goals: Central Florida Takes Action

GLOBALLY SPEAKING

- 30. Peace News

LETTERS

- 2. A Letter From the Advisory Council Chair Emerita
- 4. A Letter From the Director





Community and Belonging: Unlocking the Solidarity Dividend

We are different. We are unique. When has that ever not been so? How do we empathize with one another? Find compassion and curiosity about those who see the world so individually? How do we not become extreme in our views to where we begin to hear voices in our heads, lashing out and otherizing our fellow human beings?

Dehumanization leads to genocide—the worst of human tragedies. And yet we hear people among us demeaning one another, the first step in treating others as less than human.

Moving toward peace and nonviolence means defaulting to the question—how did they come to believe this way? What might I need to know to more fully understand their perspective? What can I share about myself—my fears, tragedies, and triumphs—that, if revealed, might bring us to a deeper understanding of one another?

We have a choice in this life—in this world—to live in harmony and seek common ground—or to fight and harm one another, and live in fear that we might be the next target.

I have had friends tell me they no longer walk outside for fear of their neighbors and their safety. It does not have to be this way. We can, each one of us, practice nonviolence and create bridges of understanding, friendship, and connection.

Humanity is in a movement toward love and unification. In her 2021 book, *The Sum of Us: What Racism Costs Everyone and How We Can Prosper Together*, Heather McGhee suggests we replace the zero-sum paradigm, the idea that gain for one would be a loss for the other, with a new system of cross-racial

solidarity. What she calls the “Solidarity Dividend” is possible through our shared humanity, and collective action that benefits all of us. In her assessment, she comes to know deeply we need each other to thrive in this world.

Through PJI, look for opportunities in the year ahead to come together for a continuous discovery of our unifying elements—through relationship, friendship, and dialogue. Be it through the CRC Network and conference, workshops, healing retreats, dialogues such as Sanford Speaks (page 10) and the Black Listening Leaders session (page 22), or Partnership for the Goals (page 28), all are detailed in this edition of the Journal, and we invite you to participate. All are welcome!

Now is the time to be the one—to practice peace and inspire others through kindness and curiosity. We can't do this alone. We need each other to remind us of the angels of our better nature and coach us on how to move into conflicts reflectively and skillfully. When things get difficult, ask a friend, colleague, or fellow practitioner for help. It feels so good to realize we can be agents of change and community building every day in every interaction. With this intention, we are more likely to unlock our “Solidarity Dividend” and shift the paradigm toward belonging and love.

Join us!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rachel C. Allen". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Rachel C. Allen
Peace and Justice Institute,
Executive Director

CREATING A
Resilient
COMMUNITY
NETWORK

A collective impact movement collaborating across sectors, to transform Central Florida into a region of prevention, hope, healing, & resilience for all.

In 2019, PJI began a collective impact movement to create a more resilient, trauma-informed community. In partnership with the Early Learning Coalition of Orange County, PJI convened the first annual Creating a Resilient Community Conference and established a strategic planning group now known as the Creating a Resilient Community (CRC) Network. The group's work includes education, advocacy, research and data collection, and creating shared language around trauma-informed practices. Today, the Network has over **500 members**, spanning multiple community sectors and representing over **250 local organizations**.



Bi-monthly Meetings



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scan the QR code:



THE INTERSECTION OF PEACEBUILDING & TRAUMA HEALING

by Sofiya Asedrem

Peace and Justice Institute, Resilience Community Manager

As the official convener of the Creating a Resilient Community (CRC) Network in Central Florida, the Peace and Justice Institute's (PJI) mission is to promote peace and justice for all with the aim of nurturing an inclusive, caring, and respectful environment within our community—one where conflict leads to growth and transformation. After over a decade of working at the grassroots level—on issues relating to nonviolence, conflict transformation, diversity, equity, and inclusion—PJI identified the need to address trauma and build resilience locally. This grew out of an awareness that it is not possible to build peace without first helping our community heal from traumas they've experienced in the past, and continue to endure—many of which are the legacy of historical and systemic challenges and inequalities. Such traumas have presented themselves in the form of community violence, racialized conflict, economic disparities, mental health crises, a lack of basic services for certain groups of society (i.e. health), and more.

ADOPTING NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL APPROACHES

The challenges mentioned above are not unique to our community, and have been represented in national models such as the Pair of ACEs (see figure 1.). This figure depicts how communities with high levels of Adverse Childhood Experiences are

also rooted in soil that is made up of many “Adverse Community Environments,” such as discrimination, poverty, poor housing quality, affordability, and more (Ellis, Dietz and Chen, 2022). The Pair of ACEs model reveals truths about our community as well as many others throughout the nation and world, in the way that the tree is planted in soil that is “steeped in structural racism, robbing it of nutrients necessary to support a thriving

Guidance Note 2022, p.5). They related the two by stating, “MHPSS [Mental Health and Psychosocial Support] and peacebuilding are mutually reinforcing processes: building positive peace enhances the conditions for providing mental health and psychosocial support and services as well as wider social well-being” (p.5). The World Health Organization (WHO) too has addressed the linkages between health and peace. In a recent report, the WHO points out that if individuals and groups enjoy equitable access to physical and mental health services, then they will be more likely to make meaningful contributions to sustainable peace and reconciliation (WHO 2020, p.5).

To provide a tangible example of potential consequences of a lack of mental health and psychosocial support, or the effects of adverse community environments, research has shown that exposure to traumatic experiences are linked to substance use disorders. In particular, around 60% of those who experience post-traumatic stress disorder (a disorder that develops in some individuals after experiencing a terrifying event—such as military combat, domestic abuse, childhood abuse, physical or sexual assault, racism or other kinds of discrimination), subsequently develop substance abuse problems (Khoury et al., 2010). Adverse childhood experiences and other kinds of toxic stress contribute to a dysregulation of individuals' biological stress response system, and in turn, individuals

community” (p.19). This realization and natural shift in the work at PJI echoes many national and international calls to address trauma and wider social wellbeing as a part of greater efforts to bring everyone into the space of building peaceful, thriving communities.

Further, in a recent report published on integrating mental health and psychosocial support into peacebuilding, international experts point out that “over time, social well-being affects the extent to which individuals and communities can contribute to peace, thereby interrupting cycles of violence” (United Nations Development Program





Figure 1. The Pair of ACEs

affected often try to self-medicate. These kinds of conditions then limit one's ability to function as contributors to building a peaceful community.

MOVING FROM TRAUMA-AFFECTED TO TRAUMA-INFORMED

Some of the common terms used within this body of work include moving from being trauma-affected to being “trauma-aware” or “trauma-informed.” In its 2022 report, the UNDP has acknowledged both as common approaches in peacebuilding (UNDP Summary Report, 2022). Some of these terms are used interchangeably, though there are distinctions, with a continuum of progression starting with trauma awareness, to trauma sensitivity, to trauma responsiveness, to trauma informed (Wall et al. 2016, p.5). At PJI, there has been a focus on becoming “trauma-informed.” This refers to an approach where interaction is influenced by “an understanding of the impact of interpersonal violence and victimization of an individual's life and development”

(Elliott et al. 2005, 462). The critical importance of this approach is that it ensures that when working with members of the community, organizations recognize the impact of trauma on one's life, in order to interact with individuals in a manner that is consistent with the recovery process and does not pose the risk of retraumatization for individuals (ibid).

Another approach is healing-centered peacebuilding (UNDP Summary Report, p.20). This approach focuses on the importance of centering the trauma healing process in peacebuilding work. As such, it considers “mental distress to be a critical variable in violent conflict and instability” and sees trauma not only as a “consequence of violence but also a cause of instability” (Yoder-Maina, 2021).

Going back to the example of one who may be experiencing PTSD, considering both approaches (trauma-informed or aware, and healing-centered peacebuilding) helps ensure that an affected individual has access to professional services in order to provide an early diagnosis, and any necessary intervention, treatment,

or therapy. Individuals who receive such support are more likely to live a healthy and meaningful life, hence being able to contribute to collective peace.

EVIDENCE FOR THE WIDESPREAD NEED FOR TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACHES

The evidence for incorporating trauma-informed approaches is commonly referred to as PACEs Science (Stevens, 2019). This body of research primarily grew from the CDC-Kaiser Permanente ACE Study conducted in 1998 by Vincent Felitti, MD, FACP, Robert F. Anda, MD, MS, and a group of other researchers (Felitti et al., 1998). The study included a mailed questionnaire to over 13,000 adults about adverse childhood experiences including psychological, physical, or sexual abuse; violence against one's mother; or living with household members who were substance abusers, mentally ill or suicidal, or ever imprisoned. In addition, the researchers compared how many categories of ACEs respondents had to measures of adult risk behavior, health status, and disease. The study showed that more than half of respondents reported at least one ACE, and as exposure to ACEs increased, so did the presence of adult disease. It is noteworthy that 79.4% of respondents were white (p.249). Since the CDC-Kaiser study, a body of research has looked at wider demographics and shown that children of different races and ethnicities do not experience ACEs equally. In the U.S. the prevalence of ACEs is highest among Black and Hispanic children in every region (Sacks & Murphey, 2018). Low socioeconomic status is also a major risk factor for ACEs. In the 2019-2020 National Survey of Children's Health, 15.5% of children ages 0-17 experienced two or more ACEs in the state of Florida (HHS, 2020). These statistics also point to the factors depicted in the Pair of ACEs (refer to figure 1).



Figure 2. Goals of the CRC Network

Implications from this study are continuous and cyclical and must be dealt with holistically. When children experience ACEs, they carry the effects of these ACEs into adulthood, and as adults, these traumas impact the way they approach and interact with individuals in their family, workplace, and other environments. As such, our community must identify ways for prevention and healing that meet the needs of all demographics and sectors of society (i.e. all age groups, genders, ethnicities, races, socioeconomic statuses, etc.).

A MULTI-SECTOR AND MULTI-LEVEL APPROACH

There is a consensus that in order to address the impact of ACEs and toxic stress in local communities and at a larger scale, the response should entail an approach that is multi-sectoral and multi-leveled. The CRC Network is an initiative that follows this model. For example, the Goals of the CRC Network (see below in figure 2.) have been adopted based on recommendations provided in the 2020 Roadmap for Resilience: The California Surgeon General’s Report on Adverse Childhood Experiences, Toxic Stress, and Health. This report is an example of national evidence-based best practices in addressing ACEs.

CRC Network goals include 1) creating shared language and understanding of problems and solutions, 2) expanding

representation and accountability (shared accountability), 3) learning, collaborating and deepening connections (shared experiences), and 4) leveraging impact through research, data, policy, and advocacy (shared metrics) (see figure 2.). All of these goals are implemented through a cross-sectoral framework.

In addition to the state of California adopting this roadmap to address our nation’s public health crisis, we have seen other national initiatives to deal with ACEs and trauma. For example, the RISE (Resilience Investment, Support, and Expansion) from Trauma Act was introduced in the U.S. Senate in 2019. Though not yet passed, this bill would establish and extend programs to coordinate services for individuals of all ages who have experienced or may experience trauma (S.1770). This includes “grants to establish coordinating bodies to create strategic plans to address trauma based on community needs.” Such a bill would provide for interventions such as the CRC Network to be further integrated and funded through national initiatives.

PACEs Connection is another national movement that takes a multi-leveled approach. A social network of 40,000+ members and over 400 geographical communities, the online space has been created to unite people, organizations, systems and communities working to implement trauma-informed and resilience-building practices based on ACEs science (PACEs Connection, 2022). The platform includes a local community chapter dedicated to Central Florida, which is currently managed by PJI.

MOVING FROM LOCAL TO GLOBAL

Such initiatives fit into international frameworks such as the above mentioned United Nations Development Report on Mental Health and Peacebuilding and WHO Peace through Health Framework, as well as the United

Key Integration Principles

-  **Co-create an integrated approach**
-  **Take a holistic, multisectoral and multilevel approach**
-  **Relationship building, coordination and networking**
-  **Joint context analysis and assessment**
-  **Strategically balance short-and long-term goals**
-  **Develop a joint monitoring, evaluation, and learning framework**
-  **Adapt local integrated interventions into national contexts and frameworks**
-  **Do no harm**
-  **Acknowledge and address stigma, including that related to MHPSS issues**
-  **Acknowledge, manage, and support personnel well-being**

Figure 3. UNDP Key Principles on Integrating Mental Health and Psychosocial Support into Peacebuilding

Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The UNDP offers 10 relevant principles for Peacebuilding Practitioners to integrate MHPSS into their work (Guidance Note, 2022 - see figure 3.). Many of the key principles relate to the strategy and goals of PJI and the CRC Network. For example, suggestions include taking a holistic multisectoral approach and adopting local integrated interventions into national contexts and frameworks.

In reference to the SDGs, the work of PJI and the CRC Network addresses goals #3 Good Health and Well-being, and #16 Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions (see figure 4.).

The Lancet Commission on global

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS



Figure 4. United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Addressed by this Work

mental health and sustainable development (2018) is a well-recognized publication that has elaborated on how SDGs may broaden the global mental health agenda through a few different pillars, including approaching mental health as both a public good and a fundamental human right. The report acknowledges the persistence of human rights abuses globally—with individuals imprisoned, living on the streets, or placed in mental institutions, often without legal protection at the same time that government investment in mental health remains low—all resulting in a global health crisis (Patel et al. 2018, p.1553).

This is the same paradigm from which PJI views its role in furthering peacebuilding by addressing community trauma. Peacebuilding will only be possible when mental health is realized as a human right and a public good. The CRC Network continues to grow its collective impact to achieve this goal locally—by helping our community heal and creating a more resilient, trauma-informed community.

Sofiya Asedrem currently serves as an Implementation Coordinator at the Peace and Justice Institute. She received her M.A. in Political Science from the University of Central Florida and B.A. in International Affairs & Development from The George Washington University.



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RACE, EQUALITY, EQUITY, & INCLUSION: THE CITY OF SANFORD UNITES FOR CHANGE

While much work is needed to address racial equity within our communities, the efforts taken by the city of Sanford are unique.

Sanford is a community that values, nurtures, and encourages the diversity of its residents. With a population of 62,547 people, the white population comprises 51.56% and the Black population comprises 28.67% based on the information found in the US Census Bureau, facing race is essential to the health and welfare of the city. Mirroring cities throughout the country, despite progress in addressing explicit discrimination, racial inequities persist across all indicators for success, including education, criminal justice, employment, housing, public infrastructure, and health.

Current inequities are sustained by historical legacies, structures, and systems that repeat patterns of exclusion, despite the lack of explicit intention. Without sustained leadership support and intentional positive intervention, the city, like so many others throughout our country, will continue to inadvertently perpetuate racial inequities.

Government has the unique ability to clearly integrate racial equity into operations and policy to drive systemic change. The city of Sanford recognizes the need to continuously take steps to unite, improve community relations, and address racial inequity. Thus, the city created a focused intervention to address racial equity by establishing the Race, Equality, Equity, and Inclusion (REEI) Advisory Committee.

The concept for the REEI committee took root after a local community organizer proposed a plan in June of 2020 to paint a Black Lives Matter mural on the pavement of historic Goldsboro Boulevard in front of Sanford's Police Department. This came in response to the killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and others, followed by local and nationwide protests.

Meetings with members of Black Lives Matter, social justice advocates, and residents of the historic Goldsboro community prompted Sanford commissioners to approve Resolution No. 2937 on February 22, 2021, creating the Race, Equality, Equity, and Inclusion Advisory Committee. Resolution No. 2937 states:

The city of Sanford recognizes racism and social inequities unfairly disadvantage specific individuals and communities and sap the strength of the whole society through the waste of human resources... The collective prosperity of the city depends upon the equitable access to opportunity for every resident regardless of the color of their skin or social status.

PATHWAY TO RACIAL EQUITY

With Resolution No. 2937 in place, addressing racial equity began with intentionality. The work of the REEI committee began to recommend strategies and actions to reduce racial inequities and improve success for all groups in the city.

The city of Sanford contracted with the Peace and Justice Institute (PJI) as consultants to support the work. PJI helped the newly formed committee train together, host community dialogues, and develop an actionable equity plan with recommendations for the city of Sanford. PJI provided continuous consultation and engagement throughout the REEI committee's implementation, including engagement in the committee selection, preparation, and development, community education and dialogue, and reporting in support of the city's needs.

A committee of 15 members was formed with each city commissioner and the mayor nominating one person from a pool of applicants to serve, and the city manager selecting the remaining members.

To train and develop the committee, three workshops were presented by PJI to lay a foundation for dialogue in a safe and open environment. Committee members were invited to bring their lived experiences as they relate to the scholarship and theory of race and equity. Committee training was intended to cultivate knowledge and create a culture capable of deep listening and learning from the community and supporting the implementation of the recommendations.

Over the course of three sessions, committee members learned about the racialized history in the United States and Sanford, implicit bias, racist policies such as redlining and inequitable mortgage lending practices, and white supremacy.



In each session, individuals were invited to share personal stories and explore how they might move toward a more beloved, equitable community in Sanford. Framing this work were the Principles for How We Treat Each Other, practices of respect and community building presented by the Peace and Justice Institute.

Once the committee was established and trained, the work of developing the community dialogues, named Sanford Speaks, began. PJI's programming, designed to create a safe space for engaging in difficult conversations, would cultivate a healthy and accountable culture centered on inclusive excellence.

Three Sanford Speaks events were developed and facilitated to educate and

create a safe space for participants to express concerns, needs, and visions for the community about equity, diversity, and inclusion. These community dialogues served to normalize conversations about race, aiming to improve planning, decision-making, and resource allocation leading to more racially equitable policies and programs.

Participant feedback and quantitative and qualitative assessment data from each session was recorded to present a report to the city commission. Following each event, committee members met to discuss participant feedback and assessment data. The debrief meetings served the REEI committee as it formulated recommendations and actionable items



for the city of Sanford. The voices within the report include multiple stakeholders: taxpayers who live within the city of Sanford, residents with Sanford addresses who live outside the city limits, city of Sanford employees, and residents who recreate and visit the city.

Survey data suggested the public perceives there is much work to be done to move Sanford toward the vision of an inclusive and equitable city. Notably, the following themes emerged:

- Inequities in jobs, service, housing, law enforcement, education, and recreation
- Disparity in city services
- Disparity in quality of the built environment and spaces for recreation throughout the city
- Disparity in food quality and availability throughout the city

- A lack of Black businesses in the downtown area
- Not all cultures feel welcomed and comfortable at downtown businesses, events, and activities
- Discipline disparities based on race and a lack of Black and Brown leadership in the schools
- A lack of focus on the true history of Sanford

Based on the sharing at Sanford Speaks and the survey data, the REEI committee outlined recommendations for the city of Sanford in a report summarizing key findings and other pertinent information believed to be beneficial to understand the community's current equity climate. The priority recommendation was to create a standing REEI committee so that the foundational work done would be

lasting, with continuous accountability provided by the committee.

Prior to the final recommendations coming in from the REEI committee, the city of Sanford Commission approved one recommendation: The Paths to Reconciliation. This project is intended to address the history of race relations in the city of Sanford. Located at Fort Mellon Park, the design is envisioned as a pedestrian pathway that includes kiosks with history and stories.

Additionally, the REEI committee makes recommendations that provide a roadmap to address racial equity for the city of Sanford. Once the commission approves the report, the city of Sanford staff will work with community stakeholders on the implementation of the recommendations.



The priority recommendation was to create a standing REEI committee so that the foundational work done would be lasting, with continuous accountability provided by the committee.



Read the full report here:



PRINCIPLES FOR HOW WE TREAT EACH OTHER

Our Practice of Respect and Community Building

1. **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.
2. **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.
3. **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.
4. **Practice asking honest and open questions.** A great question is ambiguous, personal and provokes anxiety.
5. **Give space for unpopular answers.** Answer questions honestly even if the answer seems unpopular. Be present to listen not debate, correct or interpret.
6. **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.
7. **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.
8. **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.
9. **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.
10. **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?”
11. **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 nonviolence to others—and to ourselves.
12. **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.
13. **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.

Prepared by the Peace and Justice Institute with considerable help from the works of Peter Block, Parker Palmer, the Dialogue Group and the Center for Renewal and Wholeness in Higher Education



PJI SUMMER 2023

Teachers Academy

SESSION I

June 12 - 16

SESSION II

June 26 - 30

In person in Orlando, Florida

For More Information Email
contact@peacejusticeinstitute.com

"More now than ever before, I feel these conversations and exposures help us heal and be better educators and more importantly, better humans."

PEACE AND
JUSTICE INSTITUTE

All People. All Voices. All Matter.

PJI Through the Years



2008

PJI is founded as an Initiative.

2009

PJI adopts the Principles for How We Treat Each Other.

2010

Valencia faculty attend the University of Notre Dame's Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies "Teaching Peace in the 21st Century" seminar.

2011

PJI hosts the first scholar-in-residence, Dr. Michael Nagler, Gandhian scholar of nonviolence and author of *Search for a Nonviolent Future*.

2012

The PJI Advisory Council is established.

2013

PJI launches Global Peace Week. Peggy McIntosh comes to Valencia College and inaugurates First SEED cohort and introduces us to the notion of privilege and equitable classrooms.

2014

PJI hosts Conversations on Race in response to emerging civil unrest throughout the United States. PJI launches Conversation on Justice.

2015

The city of Orlando partners with PJI to host Orlando Speaks, dialogue between residents and police. PJI celebrates the transition from an Initiative to an Institute on July 18.



2016

PJI trains 3,500 City of Orlando employees. Scott Maxwell from the *Orlando Sentinel* includes PJI in his annual list of "101 Things to Love about Central Florida."

2017

PJI expands its leadership team, develops corporate training, and increases its community programming. President Sandy Shugart highlights PJI in Valencia College's 50 Year Anniversary Program.

2018

Rachel C. Allen, PJI Director, is invited to speak at a special session of the United Nations to present PJI as "A Credible Pathway to the Culture of Peace." PJI facilitates nine Ocoee and Beyond: Paths to Truth and Reconciliation community forums. PJI Teachers Academy begins.

2019

PJI convenes the annual Creating a Resilient Community (CRC): From Trauma to Healing Conference and CRC Network.

2020

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, PJI swiftly moves all programming online, including the CRC Conference.

2021

PJI receives Orlando Mayor Buddy Dyer's Community Builder Award.

2022

PJI wins the *Orlando Business Journal* Diversity In Business Award. The city of Sanford hires PJI as lead consultant to develop their REEI (Race, Equality, Equity and Inclusion) Committee.



The Future of Reproductive Rights in Post Roe v. Wade America

by Dan Tello

Bonner Scholar at the University of Richmond

PJI Intern, Summer 2022

On June 24, 2022, a historic event happened. The Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade by a 6-3 majority. Roe v. Wade was the landmark 1973 case which gave Americans the right to access abortion. The reasoning was that making abortion illegal violated the 14th Amendment, which gives Americans the right to privacy.

Before Roe v. Wade's overturn, 13 states had "trigger laws" which stated that, should Roe v. Wade be overturned, abortion would be illegal. These states were Arkansas, Idaho, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, and Wyoming. At the time of this writing, Florida passed a bill to ban abortion after 15 weeks. The only exception to this ban is if the pregnancy would endanger the mother's life. However, the ban did not include exceptions for cases of rape, incest, or child trafficking.

It is important to note that out of all abortions performed in Florida in 2019, only 2% of abortions were performed after 15 weeks. Even when a person over 15 weeks pregnant gets an abortion, they have one either because they did not know they were pregnant or had trouble securing the financial resources.

Roe v. Wade is not the only Supreme Court ruling that has the chance of being overturned due to this decision. In the words of Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas, "we should reconsider all of this court's substantive due process precedents, including Griswold, Lawrence, and Obergefell." These bills ruled that married couples have the right

to use contraceptives without government restriction, that anti-sodomy laws were unconstitutional, and that the right to marry applies to same-sex couples.

According to an NPR poll, this ruling is highly unpopular as only 33% of Americans support the overturning of Roe v. Wade. Pew Research has shown that nearly 75% of people aged 18-29 believe abortion should be legal in most or all cases. The age range maps itself perfectly with the age range of abortion performed since the CDC has shown that more than half of all abortions are provided for women aged 20-30.

Throughout the decades of debate regarding whether or not abortion is moral, the decision to oppose abortion often comes from one's religious views. When looking at opinions on abortion based on religious communities, one can find a vast, diverse set of opinions regarding the issue, with some groups overwhelmingly in favor of abortion, others overwhelmingly against abortion rights, and some groups divided 50/50.

Some examples of religious groups who overwhelmingly support the right to abortion are the Jewish community, with 83% of respondents saying that abortion should be legal in most or all cases. Buddhists closely follow this number, with

82% saying that abortion should be legal in most cases. In fact, following the overturn of Roe v. Wade, many Jewish groups and synagogues have claimed that the new anti-abortion laws violated their religious freedom. They stated that a fetus is a part of the mother and that personhood comes when the baby takes its first breath.

An example of a religious group divided on the issue would be Muslims, with 55% stating abortion should be legal in most or all cases. One example of a religious group overwhelmingly against abortion is Jehovah's Witnesses, with 75% stating that abortion should be illegal in most or all circumstances. This number is followed closely by white evangelical Protestants, with 74% of respondents saying that abortion should be illegal in most or all cases.

However, it is important to note that not all Christians agree on abortion rights. The religious group with the most support for abortion rights is, in fact, a denomination of Christianity, Unitarian Universalists, with 90% stating that abortion should be legal.

When talking about the views on abortion, the topic of gender is inevitable. Regarding how men and women view abortion, 63% of women believe that abortion should be legal in most or all cases, while 58% of men believe abortion should be legal in most or all cases.

When discussing abortion, race becomes a significant factor. This is because the Black community will be disproportionately affected by the passing of this decision.

The Guttmacher Institute, a pro-choice organization, has stated that this is due to systemic racism and a lack of proper contraceptives. Statistics have shown that women of color are far more likely to get an abortion than white women. For Black women, the abortion rate was 23.8 per 1,000 women. Meanwhile, for white women, it was 6.6 per 1,000 women. It is important to note, that due to systemic inequalities, Black women are already three times more likely than white women to die in childbirth. By removing access to abortion, the rate of Black women dying in childbirth will only increase. Lower income women are far more likely to get an abortion than wealthy women. The data shows that single white women under the age of 35 had 64 times the wealth of single Black women.

The fact is that banning abortion does not stop abortion; it only makes it more challenging to gain access to safe abortion. Data has shown that abortion is more common in countries where it is illegal than in countries where it is legal.

If these ideas were implemented, the abortion rates in the U.S. would go down drastically; one outcome that both the pro-choice and pro-life sides would agree on is worth the investment.

11 ways to safely reduce abortions without reducing access.

Compiled based on national statistics and findings.

- STEP 1** Invest in comprehensive sex education. Doing this will drastically decrease the rate of teenage pregnancy because if you look at the states with the highest teen pregnancy rate, they all have abstinence-only education.
- STEP 2** Prioritize the prevention of sexual violence.
- STEP 3** Improve access to contraceptives. Currently, 25% of women of reproductive age (13-44), which is more than 19 million people, are in need of publicly funded contraception and live in contraception deserts.
- STEP 4** Require federal family paid leave.
- STEP 5** Offer universal healthcare.
- STEP 6** Provide affordable or accessible childcare options.
- STEP 7** Reduce disparity in pregnancy outcomes by prioritizing racial equity in healthcare.
- STEP 8** Provide quality prenatal and postnatal care.
- STEP 9** Provide mental health support postpartum.
- STEP 10** Ensure access to safe and affordable housing.
- STEP 11** Create more reliability and consistency in abortion laws.

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Reflecting With Aida Diaz

An Interview with One of the Co-Founders of PJI

by Britney Pierce

How did your childhood inform your commitment to peacebuilding?

When my father was in the U.S. Army I had the wonderful opportunity to travel and live in different countries. Living in different countries allowed me to experience and learn about the people and their cultures. I understood at an early age we may be different, but there are more similarities between us.

You are so well-known for your gift of hospitality. How did you foster this love and compassion?

I want people to feel welcome and part of the group. It gives me great pleasure giving to people and then knowing that they are comfortable in the space.

What's one of the lessons from your father that stuck with you?

As a military brat, there are many. One of them was to listen and not be afraid to speak up.

How would you like to be remembered by your students and colleagues at Valencia College?

I would like to be remembered as fair, honest, and willing to speak up for what is right.

What do you know now that you wish you had known when you started teaching?

It's important to meet the student where they are and not worry so much about the "test." Help the student as many times as possible so the student feels they have accomplished something by the end of the class.

What are your hobbies and special interests?

I love to ride my bike, read, work in my garden when it's not blistering hot (LOL), and travel.

Who is your favorite author?

Gabriel García Marquez.

Who are your favorite musicians?

Luciano Pavarotti and Antonio Bocelli.

What is your proudest accomplishment?

Being the mother of two wonderful young men AND co-founding PJI.

What is your favorite season?

Summer, fall, winter, or spring? Would it be fair to say, there's something special about each one.

Who inspires you and why?

My husband Alan. I appreciate his positive outlook on life and how he doesn't let the small stuff get in the way.

What gives you hope?

The work we do at PJI. There are people I have met through our workshops that share similar feelings and thoughts and are doing the work of building connections. This gives me hope.

You're leaving Valencia College as PJI turns 15. As one of the founders, what makes you most proud of this work?

I LOVE how PJI evolves to meet the needs of the community. We continue to learn and grow. I look forward to the next 15 years.



Advancing Racial Equity in Our Communities:

Black Leaders' Perspectives on the State of Equity in Philanthropy

by Rachel C. Allen MA, Aaron M. Ellis PhD, Andres Flores MS,
William Jefferson MPA, Bahíyyah D. Maroon PhD, and Shawn Welcome

Inspired and moved to act by recent events and the political climate of our time, Wells Fargo, with a substantial grant-making foundation, initiated an effort to understand how funders can advance racial equity through better funding practices. With a grant made to the Peace and Justice Institute (PJI) and in partnership with the Polis Institute, Wells Fargo convened nonprofit organizations led by and primarily serving people of color to have an intentional, facilitated conversation on the matter.

PJI and the Polis Institute coordinated a Listening Session to hear from executive leaders working to build equity in our communities. The Listening Session featured 18 Black nonprofit leaders from diverse sectors, ranging from mental health service providers to agriculture and permaculture practitioners, from conservationists to business consultants, and from mentors and educators to specialists focusing on adverse childhood experiences, and more.

While participants noted some successful outcomes and good practices in their experiences with funders, the listening session uncovered the need for greater transparency, flexibility,

and increased understanding and inclusion of Black nonprofit leaders in funding processes.

Three key frames emerged from the conversations; Black nonprofit executives and leaders spoke about the obstacles, positive practices, and recommendations for equitable funding for Black-led organizations within the philanthropic sector.

Obstacles to Equity-Informed Philanthropy

- Inadequate capacity at funding institutions for equity-based funding strategies and practices
- Failure to align granting and measurement practices with equity principles
- Funders' lack of awareness and consideration of racial and ethnic issues

Positive Practices by Philanthropies

- Adaptive and responsive investment practices
- Authentic partnering with Black-led nonprofit organizations
- Commitment to building the capacity of Black-led nonprofits through multiple methods



Recommendations for Funders to Elevate Equitable Funding

- Philanthropic entities must grow capacity for equity-based funding strategies and practices
- Improve granting practices for fairness
- Update fund disbursement frameworks
- Change performance measurement expectations for fairness
- Establish accountability and transparency in sub-granting protocols
- Establish and act on meaningful internal and external diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) goals and objectives

The full report offers comprehensive insights into the experience of Black executives regarding the practices of funders and investors, and marks the beginning of necessary conversations about how funders can fulfill their philanthropic goals in partnership with local Black nonprofit leaders. Representing a wide range of Black organizations and leaders from across Central Florida, the report offers robust insights from on-the-ground experiences of dealing with funders while striving to serve underserved communities. Finally, the report outlines urgent needs, important considerations, and next steps for how funders can support the struggle to achieve equity in our communities.

Find the full report here:



This work is generously funded by



WE BELONG HERE

by the PJI Editorial Team with Josh Bell
Leader and Advocate for the LGBTQ+ Community

Our LGBTQ+ community members are neither guests nor political pawns. We belong here.

Many of us have been bullied in our lives and understand how this abuse affects mental and physical health. Even brief instances of bullying cause anxiety and stress. Consider the anguish when a diverse community is the target of a bias initiated by state legislators that becomes law. The message is that you are invisible and you do not belong.

This is the reality facing the LGBTQ+ community in Florida. The vague and discriminatory interpretation of Florida Senate Bill 1834 and House Bill 1557, both titled “Parental Rights in Education” (which became effective on July 1, 2022), makes schools less safe for LGBTQ+ students, families, teachers, and staff. Inside the classroom, how does a young child respond when asked to draw a picture of her family, which might be two dads or two moms, and wants to share it with others? Outside the classroom, how does a teacher react when their school district may be subject to a lawsuit by a parent who judges a discussion as inappropriate?

Confusion due to the law's lack of clarity on what is age-level appropriate creates a culture of fear

that impacts inclusive learning. It puts unjust pressure on students not to self-identify and on teachers and school counselors who want to protect students from anti-LGBTQ+ or any stereotypical rhetoric and bullying. Marginalizing our communities, especially our transgender siblings of every age, goes beyond exclusion and can be life-threatening.

Perpetuating identity denial and discrimination is harmful, even more so when the state government sanctions it. This legislation renders the LGBTQ+ community powerless to be their authentic selves. It deprives people of freedom of expression, a fundamental human right, with little recourse to protest without consequence. When identity becomes politicized, it dehumanizes with detrimental physical and mental health effects on already vulnerable young people.

According to Josh Bell, “Our LGBTQ+ community members are neither guests nor political pawns. We belong here. We are part of the fabric of Florida. We are

parents, children, grandparents, and siblings. We work in every profession. We are present in every socioeconomic stratum. We are members of every racial, ethnic, and language group. We represent every faith tradition and a broad range of secular perspectives. We live in every neighborhood. We attend every school.”

I have an invitation to allies of the LGBTQ+ communities. As a gay man, as a parent, and as your neighbor, I am imploring you to make it clear to every elected and appointed official that you know we belong here. Make it clear that you will not stand idly by while we are attacked, while our rights are stripped away from us, and while violent language leads to violent actions. We do not need you to advocate FOR us; we need you to advocate alongside us. The only thing that will stop the continued implementation of discriminatory laws and policies is more people stepping up, speaking out, voting for pro-LGBTQ+ candidates, and being unapologetic about our dignity and rights.

The invitation to my LGBTQ+ siblings is to please ask for support during this difficult season. Reach out to chosen family, access community resources, and contact local nonprofits. We are stronger and more resilient together than we could ever be apart.

We DO belong here. We always have, and we always will. We belong in every place at every time. With your help, we can expand the circle of inclusion until no one is on the outside.

Breathe

by Becky Hemsley

She sat at the back and they said she was shy,
She led from the front and they hated her pride,
They asked her advice and then questioned her guidance,
They branded her loud, then were shocked by her silence,

When she shared no ambition they said it was sad,
So she told them her dreams and they said she was mad,
They told her they'd listen, then covered their ears,
And gave her a hug while they laughed at her fears,

And she listened to all of it thinking she should,
Be the girl they told her to be best as she could,
But one day she asked what was best for herself,
Instead of trying to please everyone else,

So she walked to the forest and stood with the trees,
She heard the wind whisper and dance with the leaves,
She spoke to the willow, the elm and the pine,
And she told them what she'd been told time after time,

She told them she felt she was never enough,
She was either too little or far far too much,
Too loud or too quiet, too fierce or too weak,
Too wise or too foolish, too bold or too meek,

Then she found a small clearing surrounded by firs,
And she stopped... and she heard what the trees said to her,
And she sat there for hours not wanting to leave,
For the forest said nothing, it just let her breathe.





Partnership for the Goals:

Central Florida Takes Action

In early May, more than one hundred leaders from different organizations came together as part of the region's first Partnership for the Goals event. The two-day summit was a partnership between the Brookings Institution, Regional Planning Council's East Central Florida Regional Resilience Collaborative, Central Florida Foundation, University of Central Florida's Center for Global Environmental and Economic Opportunity, Orange County, city of Orlando, and Florida For Good.

The Partnership for the Goals diverged from business-as-usual and leveraged the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) framework as a tool for common conversation across government, philanthropic, academic, business, and civic society, who often struggle to connect across professional vocabularies and organizational reference points. The objectives were to convene natural allies and enable collaboration and enough diversity to spark new ideas and pathways to accelerate action that would advance economic, social, and environmental priorities while each SDG has an equal seat at the table. Each Room was a high-level working group and designed

- 1) where unique priorities are respected within goals while recognizing interdependencies between goals
- 2) with a focus on actionable ideas within an SDG that are "big enough to matter and small enough to get done" over a defined horizon
- 3) convenings celebrate informal discussions among peers focusing on what could be best for an issue.

Day one highlighted the [Thrive Initiative](#) of the Central Florida Foundation when local leaders learned about efforts in the region to achieve the SDGs. Day two brought the Brookings Institute's 17 Rooms event to the community where CEO/Executive, Director/Organizational Leadership, and co-leaders, chaired rooms representing each of the 17 SDGs. By gathering leaders into groups related to their area of expertise, conversations flowed more easily to concrete commitments on how their organizations can work across the next year and a half to create a greater collective impact around the SDGs. The event created new connections for many involved, and by the end of day two, more than two dozen actionable ideas were identified, some of which are

already yielding results. Most importantly, the event is the precipice of new collaborations across regional sectors, and Brookings stated it is quickly becoming a model for other global communities. It will remain a cornerstone event of the Regional Resilience Collaborative's efforts for years to come.

Continuing on the 17 Rooms momentum, a Partnership for the Goals Next Steps workshop was conducted in early July with each of the rooms' co-leads to engage in further conversation and brainstorming activities. The workshop was used to downscale the list of prioritized actions with three high-level themes and overarching actions identified for addressing each resilience pillar: People, Planet, Prosperity. With clear action steps identified, Partnership for the Goals will propel diverse strategies, stakeholder engagement, and available resources over the next year.

HIGH-LEVEL THEMES:

During the second day at the Community Collaboration Strategy meeting, the people theme/focus changed. The theme now looks at People identified actions from an economic perspective—social contributing factors—with a core focus on action 1-4: Convene an asset-based community development initiative in specific pockets of poverty in the 8-county region (assets could include: transportation access points, food stores/farms, childcare, social barriers like GED/educational attainment, and criminal background)

PEOPLE

People Investment in and connection to capital for small local farms and food growers in areas identified as food deserts to double agricultural productivity

PLACES

Climate action and pledges, efficiency and clean energy savings alongside connected and contributing conserved lands.

PROSPERITY

Creating pipelines of employment and talent development utilizing placed-based asset identification from two perspectives (location of innovation clusters/industry and pockets of poverty and underemployed/unemployed)

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



Read the Guide to Thrive



PEACE NEWS



“The oneness of humanity is essential to advance the Culture of Peace. Early childhood development is the beginning.”

Ambassador A. K. Chowdhury
Founder of the Global Movement for The Culture of Peace

Starting Early to Build Stronger and More Peaceful Societies

The importance of early childhood development has received growing attention in the past decade, and notable gains in scientific evidence demonstrating the importance of the early years of life have risen to the forefront of child rights and child protection initiatives. With this expansion in knowledge has come a multi-disciplinary effort to understand and actively address the consequences of violence for children and their families.

After poverty and disease, violence is the world's most significant risk factor, with hundreds of millions of children affected by domestic violence each year. A growing body of literature demonstrates the transformative power of children and families as agents of change for peace. The focus is now shifting beyond simply saving children's lives to facilitating their development so they can reach their full potential and become generations of reconciliation.

Efforts to build peace in communities and among nations primarily focus on top-down approaches, with intergovernmental agencies, such as the United Nations and national governments, taking the lead in working toward peace through policy dialog and treaties. Unexplored are alternate approaches to peacebuilding that begin at the most important stage of human development: early childhood.

Source: [Early Childhood Peace Consortium](#)

CELEBRATING PEACE NEWS LOCALLY, NATIONALLY, AND INTERNATIONALLY.



French Law Mandates Green Roofs On All New Commercial Buildings

The French government has passed a law mandating all new buildings in commercial zones to partially cover their roofs in either solar panels or plants, according to Clean Technica. When the mandate was first proposed by French environmental activists, the law required the roofs to be fully covered by plants. Because of compiling costs for building owners and developers, the French government revised the proposal so that roofs only need to be partially covered.

According to U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), there are key environmental benefits to green roofs, including temperature reduction and energy efficiency, as temperatures on green roofs can be 30-40° F colder than conventional roofs lowering city-wide temperatures by up to 5° F. The EPA listed energy efficiency as a key benefit of green roofs because they can reduce building energy use by 0.7%, lowering peak electricity demand and helping consumers save \$0.23 per square foot of the roof's surface annually. Perhaps through France's leading example, other countries worldwide will observe the positive impact of green roofs on France's environment and follow suit.

Source: [Kindling](#)



Equal Pay for U.S. Women and Men's Soccer Teams

The U.S. Soccer Federation reached a deal to pay the U.S. Men's National Team and the U.S. Women's National Team equally, eliminating a contentious pay gap that saw female players earning less. The organization announced that the new collective bargaining agreement will run through 2028 and include the "equalization" of World Cup prize money. It is expected that this Agreement and its historic achievements in not only providing for equal pay will also improve the training and playing environment for national team players and will similarly serve as the foundation for the continued growth of women's soccer both in the United States and abroad.

Source: [NPR](#)

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PJI's Annual Human Peace Sign Taken at the Winter Park Library.

