

Valencia Community College

Peace and Justice Initiative



Welcome to 2011. It has been a pleasure to support the Peace and Justice Initiative as it develops on East Campus and the college. The spring semester will provide several opportunities for faculty, staff, and students to participate in lectures, workshops, reading circles or student activities that focus on making the world a better place. The campus community provides an ideal environment for discussion and reflection on how each one of us can make a difference with ourselves, our families, and those we interact with on a daily basis.

Dr. Michael N. Nagler, a Gandhian scholar on nonviolence visited the East Campus January 25th -27th. This three day residence was funded as a part of the University Club of Orlando Endowed Chair and provided an opportunity for us to have a better understanding of how we can contribute to a nonviolent future.

In late December an office in building 1, room 340 was established to further coordinate the work of the initiative. This initiative is just beginning. Your involvement and your ideas will shape the future of this work.

-Dr. Ruth Prather, East Campus President



Student Reflections following the Nagler Workshop held January 26th on the East Campus...

Nonviolence is not a dream; it was proven successful in history. Nonviolence is the solution to make our world peaceful and secure. We as individuals have power! We can learn from others but also teach others. We are all equal. We must learn not to hurt or mock others no matter the reason.

I understand nonviolence now as a real thing that has more potential than any other intellectual and spiritual power. Dr. Nagler makes us realize the possibility of positive change.

I have received insight into how to orchestrate change through nonviolence by showing love, compassion and respect to your adversaries and if at all possible, by trying to make them your ally in change.

I was ignorant about nonviolence before reading this book. Nonviolence is within our own force. I will filter out more negativity as offered by media and implement nonviolence in more of my actions and thoughts.



Please visit the Peace and Justice Initiative at our new website: www.valenciacc.edu/pji

For more information contact Jennifer Brinkley at: Jbrinkley@valenciacc.edu or 407-582-2291

Many thanks to the contributing photographers:
Don Burlinson and Willie J. Allen Jr.

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Visual Reflections: Our Time with Dr. Michael Nagler January 25-27, 2011



Nagler signing students' books after his talk.



Nagler engaged the faculty and students in deep thinking and inquiry.



Students representing multiple campuses engaged Nagler with thoughtful and insightful questions at the workshop



SGA Student engaged in Nagler's workshop



Probing questions from students keep Dr. Nagler on his toes.



Students ask further questions after the workshop with Dr. Nagler.



Students talk with Dr. Nagler at the reception prior to his lecture.

Valencia Community College

Peace and Justice Initiative



Faculty Reflections following the Nagler Workshop held January 27th on the East Campus...

I have found a place where I can expand and practice nonviolence not only at an individual level or a "spiritual practice," but at a practical level with a community of colleagues.

The workshop with Dr. Nagler has added so much dimension to understanding nonviolence beyond the personal level. As a subject to incorporate into education, I can see the practical benefits of educating and developing curriculum with the concept of nonviolence as an answer to many challenges we face today in our society. I am so grateful to see Valencia as an institution that supports these values, and I am so happy to be a part of it.



Over the past three days I have pondered the many ways nonviolence (peace) is expressed through my life. I am a firm believer that whatever one wishes of others it should begin with the self. These workshops and discussions have given me another reason to look at myself.

I loved the "Action Guide" in the text and the Visioning exercise at the workshop. Both helped me to see what actions I can take.



We very much need continued spaces, sometimes themed and sometimes casual, for authenticity as colleagues. The use of a book as a conversation starter and core information is key. Resources and vocabulary are good, but this sort of scheduled rearrangement of priorities is essential to the humanizing component of any education.



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Conflict Transformation Work Continues at Valencia



Faculty, staff and administrators from across the college participate in a 20 hour training in October 2010.

The weekend of October 15-17 brought together a truly diverse group of Valencia's faculty, support staff and administrators. We spent 20 hours with Dr. Alma Abdul-Hadi Jadallah, an internationally known conflict resolution practitioner and scholar. Dr. Jadallah shared with us her experience in conflict prevention and mitigation practice and education, training and development, **peace** building and capacity building, monitoring and evaluation, organizational development and leadership development.

On paper Dr. Jadallah is massively impressive. In person, she is inspiring, kind, and peaceful. The opportunity to have her leadership in the 20 hours of **Conflict Transformation** training was a great privilege and a prodigious learning experience.

The weekend consisted of an enormous amount of learning material, which helped our group come to realize that our shared experience totaled 295 years of dedication and attachment to Valencia Community College. There was agreement and excitement that this college does awesome work and it is a family that is always in need of refining and growth.

Friendships and work relations were formed and in many cases reinforced. By Sunday afternoon, we were all asking what was next and how we could put this material and education to work in our day-to-day lives at Valencia.

I, personally, was so excited for the opportunity to have learned effective conflict transformation skills. I have 22 years of experience in Higher Ed and have learned that a college is one of the few massive and intentional cultures that encourages and depends on different ideas, perceptions, and most of all, opinions. In places where so many different people come together, conflict is going to arise, yet it cannot thrive. An educator's charge is to make learning environments safe and give anyone

who ventures in the opportunity to try, succeed, and even fail. If there were not strong leaders to help facilitate when conflicts over ideas, policy, or learning occur, the institution would have faded long ago. The skills conveyed to this group will surely make me a leader, if I choose to accept the responsibility.

I have decided to take the information from this conflict transformation training and mentor my students and employees to protect our peers as they speak their minds, while fostering their change and growth. I am a member of the Peace and Justice Initiative, and this means that action is required. I will continue to remind others that we are free to speak, but not at the expense of exclusion or hurt to fellow humans. We are all searching for a truth, a station in life, and community. It is vital that we all take the journey in such a way that we lift up others on the path, not cut them down in order to move ahead. Conflict rears its head when one or many want to insist they know better. Peace comes from one or many acknowledging we are all here to grow and be better.

The above article by Jade Lewis, Manager IT Technology, East Campus was originally published in *The Bulletin*, October 25, 2010



Peace and Justice Mission:

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

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Peace and Justice Initiative



Coalition for the Homeless Fall Festival



Kenny, a Valencia student, offers his artistic skills to a youngster at the Coalition.

Once again the Peace and Justice Initiative (PJI), in collaboration with various Valencia clubs, faculty and staff were able to provide a fun-for-all event at the Coalition for the Homeless. There were approximately 35 volunteers servicing children and families with face painting, crafts, bounce houses, snow cones, contests, prizes, costumes, music, games, snacks, portraits and frames created lasting memories. It felt like a true convergence of positive energy and ideas. Stay tuned for our next upcoming event at the Coalition, April 16, 2011 where we hope to provide the usual array of fun activities for the children along with makeovers for the mothers and talks on dental hygiene for all. Let us know if you would like to be a part of the event.



The East Campus Psychology Club participate at the Coalition for the Homeless.

What Has PJI Meant to Me?

In the five plus months of working as a service learning intern with the Peace and Justice Initiative (PJI), I feel many of my learning objectives have not only been met, but have actually been exceeded. This service learning project should have instilled in me a deeper commitment to the values of the PJI. Yet, I remember thinking, how am I going to reach a deeper understanding when in truth, I did not know what the values of the Peace and Justice Initiative are? Today, I have not only been able to identify these values, such as: peace throughout Valencia and the surrounding community, non-violence, conflict resolution, cultural diversity and education, but I have been able to embrace them as a part of my everyday life. They have become values that I can nurture daily through consciousness.

I have also had the opportunity to feel a sense of “making a difference in the world” by preparing for and attending the “Coalition of the Homeless Fall Festival.” There I witnessed the joy people experience when fellow human beings reach out to one another. Without trying to sound cliché, I got more out of it than those receiving from the gift of a small but heart-felt party. Currently, my mind is spinning with ideas on how we, meaning the PJI, can continue to reach out to those less fortunate. Yes, I said “we,” because I feel that peace and justice will continue to always be a part of my moral belief and practices.

I am not sure that I can say which of the various projects I have undertaken with PJI I have enjoyed most. But I can certainly say that meeting Dr. Alma Jadallah has made a huge impact. I attended the three-day “Conflict Transformation Workshop” as a student as well as planner. This training has given me the beginning tools needed for conflict transformation. I know these are valuable tools that will be available to me as I delve into a teaching career. Meeting, and in some cases working with such individuals as Dr. Alma Jadallah, Rachel Allen, Dr. Yasmeen Qadri and Penny Villegas has been awe inspiring. To be among such talented individuals has given me newfound boldness. In sharing their insights and values, a desire to continue their work has awakened in me.

Overall, I have truly enjoyed my experience with the PJI, which I feel has added greatly to my knowledge base. I look forward to additional projects for the remainder of this semester and vow to continue supporting this work in the future.

By Marilyn Acosta, Service Learning Student for the Peace and Justice Initiative, SLS 2940.



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Spring Semester Calendar

Workshop: *Living a Peaceful Life*, February 4-5, with Elaine Sullivan from the Center for Renewal and Wholeness in Higher Education, Dallas TX.

Faculty, Staff and Professional Development: Conflict Transformation Training, March 18-25, with Dr. Alma Abdu-Hadi Jadallah of Kommon Denominator. A schedule of trainings will be available shortly.

Service Project: Spring Fling at the Coalition for the Homeless, April 16th, 9:00AM-Noon.

Celebration: Earth Day, April 22nd

Planning and Visioning: Peace and Justice Possibilities Meeting, April 22nd, open to all. Find out more about the Initiative and how you can get involved.



Vocabulary

As you browse through this issue, you will note several words highlighted in **red**. It is the goal of Peace and Justice Initiative to define these and other transforming words in light of the values and goals it stands for. Watch for additional words in up-coming issues.

Peace - That which is found in a society that operates in harmony where the rights and privileges of all become a priority.

Conflict Transformation - Conflict transformation is the process by which conflicts, such as ethnic conflict, are transformed into peaceful outcomes. Conflict transformation involves transforming the relationships that support violence. "At the personal level, conflict transformation involves the pursuit of awareness, growth, and commitment to change which may occur through the recognition of fear, anger, grief, and bitterness. These emotions must be outwardly acknowledged and dealt with in order for effective conflict transformation to occur."

Non-Violence – A philosophy and means for prompting social change without the use of violence. It is not passive acceptance of oppression but rather an alternative to violence and war.

Student Reflections from Introduction to Peace Studies: PAX1000

Everyone in my group had taken time to volunteer with Food Not Bombs, but it was interesting to see the varying motivations for doing so. For John, and most likely for Ricky as well, it was about the anti-establishment, anti-capitalist agenda their group perpetuates. For Gwen, Neil, and Liz, general kindness toward humanity seemed to be the motivator. I'm not sure what my motivation was, but the lesson I learned about the living, breathing humanity in everyone, regardless of their bank accounts, was a priceless lesson.

- Jack Thomas

The experience of being part of Food Not Bombs has many connections to our Peace class. When our guests from Coalition for the Homeless came to speak to us, it made me even more aware of the homeless problem in our state which allowed me to want to help. Additionally, through this course we've talked about, learned about, and shared our ideas on providing service to other and especially to those who are in need. Gandhi taught us to take on the great characteristics of helping others and not thinking about ourselves. Participating in FNB is one of the greatest things I have done in my life and I plan to continue to be part of it.

- Krystal Pherai

The Peace and Justice Initiative seeks to:

- 1) Create and teach a Peace and Justice Studies curriculum
 - Introduction to Peace Studies: PAX 1000
 - Conflict Transformation: PAX 2000
 - Internships and service learning components
- 2) Sponsor and collaborate with Student Development on Peace and Justice co-curricular activities
 - Campus programs
 - Forums
- 3) Foster a connection to Valencia's A.S./Technical programs in the conflict transformation work
 - Allied Health/Nursing
 - Paralegal
 - Criminal Justice
- 4) Offer community outreach in Peace and Justice
 - Conflict transformation/mediation
 - Forums
 - Guest speakers
 - Service
- 5) Engage in realizing Valencia's Core Competencies, especially Value
 - Train administrators, staff, students and faculty in practices and principles of conflict transformation and nonviolence
 - World Café conversations
 - Reading Circles
 - Retreats, Workshops and Possibilities Meeting