

November 2016

Newsletter of Initiatives of Change

Issue No. 40

Greetings!

It's tempting. That primitive instinct kicks in and beckons us to do whatever it takes to purge the welling fear, disorientation and anger "caused" by the circumstances spiraling around us. For me, it takes a millisecond to slide into the escalating dissonance of voices and commentary enveloping our country today -- my feeble attempt to analyze my way out of the feeling. Or perhaps we tell ourselves that we'll feel better if we can find somebody to blame for our predicament; and when we find them, we'll outsmart them, or outtalk them - maybe outvote them and then begin preparing for the counterpunch that is sure to come.



For those inclined to avoid conflict, there is the allure of getting ahead of our worries by outthrusting them - by working unceasingly for justice, by conjuring up the most impactful community change programs, by restlessly working to figure out how our "salt and light" vocation can best diminish the anxiety within and around us. And the spiral continues, the confusion grows, the gulf between each of us becomes deeper and deeper....

Since joining the Initiatives of Change USA team seven months ago, I have invested considerable time in trying to understand the fundamental tenets of this esteemed movement. I have identified deeply with the IofC's "personal change" foundation for all broader social change - a change in oneself that literally is possible only with an accountable appraisal of the manner in which our attitudes and behaviors impact those around us. Where else are you hearing that kind of idea these days?! I have connected with the IofC's belief in the mighty power of our individual and collective stories - an awakening process that requires an unnatural vulnerability in our body and spirit. I have continued to expose myself to the tools and people within the IofC network who equip us to better facilitate dialogue, understanding, and trustbuilding.

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**Please consider
a year-end
gift to Initiatives of
Change!**

Sixty percent of our support comes from people just like you! No gift is too large or too small.

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Become a sustaining donor with a monthly gift!

But ironically, it wasn't until this month's electoral tremor in the US and the accumulating aftershocks that the most distinguishing and timely element of the IofC profile began to more deeply dawn on me - it's spiritual discipline of listening. Just as I have considerable personal growth to achieve before I reflect the type of patient and consistent listening to God and conscience that will enable me to live truly free, so too must our US communities now find the discipline and fortitude to still and humble ourselves, to silently listen and reflect on what we mean to one another. I am honored to be a part of a movement that models this approach to the world, and in so doing, actually offers a set of hopeful steps for our country to ascend towards a place of true healing.

Sincerely,

Jake Hershman

Executive Director

Community Trustbuilding Fellowship

Becoming part of the solution

By Susan Corcoran

The new class of 25 has been selected for the [2017 Community Trustbuilding Fellowship](#). Participants are coming from as far away as Mexico City and from several US cities including Tulsa, OK, Des Moines, IA, Orlando, FL, LaGrange, GA, Washington, DC, and Annapolis, MD.



The group includes community activists, youth mentors, social workers, city planners, community developers, public health workers, religious leaders, historians, a foundation officer and an artist. Many, both black and white, come with a burden of unaddressed racial history in their communities and all want to know how dialogue can lead to healing and greater justice. One applicant writes, "I am especially committed to bringing about a greater understanding of our past to better understand our present in regards to race, access, equality and education." An Hispanic in the group talks of the need for Hispanics to know more about their history in the US. He says, "We want to be part of the solution and not the problem." Bringing a global perspective are immigrants from Sudan and Rwanda.

Information sessions for the program were held by alumni in Washington, DC, and in Richmond, VA. Kelly Chopus (CTF 2015) hosted two evenings at the Robins Foundation in Richmond. On those occasions Duron Chavis (CTF 2015) described his experience in the program and how it has impacted his life. Others appreciated an opportunity to hear from Parvez Khan (CTF 2015) Cassandra Lawrence (CTF 2016) and Jacquie Johnson (CFT 2016) at an information session in DC. People were free to ask questions

Important: NEW EMAIL

Moving to The Cloud!



This month IofC has moved its email server and files to The Cloud. This will keep us better connected as a global network. Going forward our email handle is simply @iofc.org. So all emails to our office should be sent to:

info.us@iofc.org

hopeinthecites@iofc.org

Protocol for staff emails is:

firstname.lastname@iofc.org

Please make a note of these changes. Thank you.

Caux Scholars 2017

Apply for CSP 2017!

A multi-disciplinary approach to conflict transformation, transitional justice, and principled leadership.



Language: English

Program Fees: US \$3800
(covers tuition, meals, lodging)

Location: Initiatives of Change
conference center in Caux,
Switzerland

Dates: June 26 - July 24, 2017

Participation: Limited to 20
students

Application deadline: February
17, 2017

and discover what they will gain from the experience. Several applications came in as a result of these evenings. One person remarked, "I was really inspired by the stories from your past alumni and faculty who spoke at the information sessions. It would truly be a privilege to be a part of this year's group."

The Community Trustbuilding Fellowship starts with the first module in January 2017 and runs for one weekend a month through May. The subjects covered are: Catalysts of change: becoming an authentic leader; Healing history: creating a new narrative for communities; Dialogue delivery: practicing skills for honest conversation; Creating a dialogue for change: getting to the underlying issues; and Strategies for engaging all sectors: building & sustaining teams. The participants will gain tools to connect theory with practice and personal transformation with social change. They will come to understand the power of history and its legacy. They will gain confidence to address issues of bias and inequity and discover a network of people from all walks of life who share their passion for reconciliation and justice.

Inspired by Hope in the Cities

Building trust in Europe's fastest growing city by Rob Corcoran

Last year 160,000 people sought asylum in Sweden, which has welcomed more refugees and migrants in proportion to its population than any other country in Europe. Stockholm is the fastest growing city in Europe. But despite its generous provision of housing, education and health care for new arrivals, Sweden ranks low for integration and social cohesion. Violent disturbances broke out in 2013 in a Stockholm suburb.



Inspired by Hope in the Cities' work in the US, Initiatives of Change Sweden launched Hope in Järva, a suburb with a large immigrant population, in order to identify the issues and to explore ways to build trust. I recently spent a week in Stockholm in support of this effort. The day after I arrived, a diverse group of 30 people gathered at the IofC Center for a Diwali celebration. A highlight of the evening was a video of the Swedish national anthem performed hip-hop style by Swedes of many racial and ethnic backgrounds produced by a Ugandan immigrant.

Hassan Mohamud is one of the co-founders of Hope in Järva. When he arrived from Somalia in 1982 he could not find an apartment near where he worked but was "steered" to a locality where immigrants were concentrated. He says, "After the 2013 disturbances, I had to ask myself why I had not done more to

More information

2016 Caux Report



Exploring the Human
Factor in Global Change



The 2016 Caux Report is now published online. Hard copies will be available from our office.

Trustbuilding now in paperback

Make this a gift this holiday season!



Trustbuilding
by Rob Corcoran



Read Rob Corcoran's latest blog
[The healing we need](#)



prevent the violence. As immigrants we have a choice: become angry and depressed, or work for positive change."

Hassan and his colleagues set out to map the resources that were already in place and to find partners. Another leader of the initiative is Rishabh Kahanna who came from India to live in Sweden three years ago. He and his Russian wife, Tatiana, host the IofC home and center. Rishabh told me, "There is not enough listening. There is mistrust between citizens and the authorities and there is also a generational division." He and Hassan are building a multi-generational network of people of different racial and ethnic groups.

I shared Hope in the Cities' experiences, principles and methodologies for building trust and healing history and wounded memory during a morning workshop with a diverse group of 65 people, including many from Somalia and Eritrea. The event was held in a school located in a suburb populated by immigrants. Case studies and lively table conversations highlighted several key components of trustbuilding: self-awareness, understanding of white privilege and the need for personal responsibility; healing history through community rituals and listening to stories; strategies to engage everyone in honest conversation; and the importance of building and sustaining networks of trust and mutual accountability.

A Sunday service at an evangelical church which also serves Egyptian Coptic and Syrian Orthodox Christians, featured young people singing American-style praise songs. The pastor, who has family roots in Arkansas, publicly recognized Hassan Mohamud as his friend and ally.

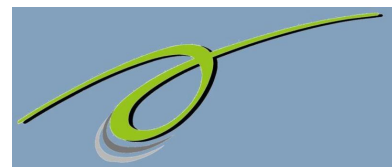
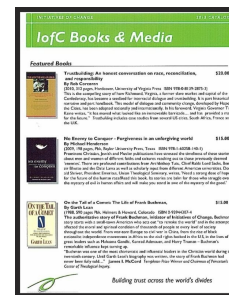
Following the service, a panel of young Swedes of different ethnicities talked about the challenges of overcoming stereotypes and the need for intergenerational dialogue. A retired doctor responded, "I have lived here for 50 years and seen you all arrive. I don't talk about immigrants but about new Swedes."

We stopped for lunch one day at a cafe owned by an Ethiopian who sells Ethiopian coffee ("the best in the world!"). He said, "I live in Sweden but I don't know any Swedes." His description of being pulled over by police while driving mirrored the experience of black Americans. I also met with a small group of business people and entrepreneurs who meet regularly to reflect and share their life journeys.

I met with local government officials in the Spånga-Tensta district, which includes an affluent suburb and an area where 50 percent of children live in poverty. The group is tasked with local development in housing, education and jobs, as well as building trust. "We don't need more studies! People are exhausted with studies," one of them told me. Another said, "People are not just passive recipients of help. They don't want to just follow our agenda." They were intrigued by some of the methodologies employed in Richmond, such as the use of a historical time line as a way of sharing the different "sacred stories" of a community, and our project that connected data on poverty with specific examples of past policies and actions that excluded and discriminated. Above all, they recognized the need to create a space where people could come together in honest conversation: a container in which trust can be built and change can occur.

Hope & inspiration

Check out our books and media catalog



Initiatives of Change, USA

is part of a diverse global network with an 80-year track record of peacebuilding, conflict transformation and forging partnerships across divides of race, class, religion and politics.

Our vision

We inspire a vision of community where a commitment to reconciliation and justice transcends competing identities and interests.

Our mission

We equip leaders to build trust in diverse communities through a process of personal change, inclusive dialogue, healing historical conflict and teambuilding

Our focus

We connect core values with personal and public action with a focus on racial reconciliation, economic inclusion and interfaith understanding.

For more information
<http://us.iofc.org>

Follow-up Links

[Initiatives of Change](#)
[Hope in the Cities \(HIC\)](#)
[Caux Scholars Program](#)
[IofC on Facebook](#)
[Trustbuilding on Facebook](#)
[HIC on Facebook](#)
[IofC on YouTube](#)
[IofC Vimeo film archives](#)

We are now in discussion about how to continue the Sweden-US collaboration on trustbuilding. Sweden is facing huge challenges, but it also has the opportunity to demonstrate a new Europe not based on race, ethnicity or national origin, where all are welcome and all feel responsible for building a healthy and inclusive democracy.

Introducing Sarah Workman

Shifting my focus



One year after returning to Richmond, I am thrilled to be here at Initiatives of Change as the new Development Coordinator.

From an early age, I focused on the wide world. My mother grew

up overseas as the child of a Navy officer and her sister lived abroad throughout my childhood. As I grew up in Richmond's Northside, I was captivated by stories delivered by my mother about her youth and my aunt in letters and on her occasional trips home. I filed anecdotes about the warm hospitality of families in Pakistan, coffee rituals in Ethiopia, and conflict-affected children in Bosnia-Herzegovina in an "explore this later" file in my mind. I was fortunate to attend Richmond's Governor's School for Government and International studies, where my interest in the world's stories continued to grow.

Thus, after graduating from Mary Washington College in 2000, it was no surprise that I made international work the focus of my career. After working at an international development organization in Washington, DC, for seven years, I spent the next eight years living "all over," including Kosovo, Uganda, and Egypt. As I marked my third anniversary of moving to Egypt in early 2015, I thought I was on track to become a "lifetime" expatriate.

However, as 2015 progressed, I started talking with my other expatriate friends more and more about the unsettling news coming from the US: young men dying at the hands of police; demonstrations popping up with increasing frequency; islamophobia and other vitriol splashed across our social media feeds and the television. As we watched these alarming events, we started to murmur: what's happening in our country?

By mid-2015, I resolved that it was time to come home. While my initial decision was made for personal reasons, the shooting at Emmanuel African Methodist Church in Charleston, SC, devastated me, and I became determined to change the focus of my life's work. I wanted to combine the professional skills in non-profit fundraising and project management I had developed over 16 years in international development with my desire to better understand the racial, religious, and social dynamics currently at play here in the US.

I am inspired by IofC's rich history of conflict transformation both here in Richmond and across the globe, and I look forward to first learning from my colleagues and then working with them to find new and lasting funding sources for IofC's work. I also hope that I'll hear from many of you in IofC's vast network in the coming months, as I consider it my first and most vital job responsibility to gather and reflect on as many stories as I can so I can effectively represent our unique and important mission and values to current and future donors. I look forward to meeting many of you soon!

Healing history

Honoring the past

By Rob Corcoran



A public event at the site of Richmond's former slave market on October 10 marked an important milestone in what Mayor Dwight Jones called "a true honoring of our complete history." Governor Terry McAuliffe, a Democrat, sat side by side with his Republican predecessor, Bob McDonnell, as city officials announced the hiring of Smith-GroupJJR, to develop a design for a memorial and heritage site. The firm was co-designer of the recently-opened National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, DC. Lonnie G. Bunch III, who directs the museum, will act as "scholarly advisor" to the Lumpkin's Jail site development.

Mayor Jones highlighted the importance of confronting the past and said that Richmonders need to be "comfortable with making each other uncomfortable." It is only through telling the full history, he said, that we can "fully address the complexities of the race issues that remain so deeply rooted today...All of us have to live with the legacy of slavery, but we don't have to be enslaved to the consequences of bitterness."

Representatives of several African countries from where enslaved people were brought to the Americas were present at the ceremony.

In 1993, Hope in the Cities and its partners led hundreds of Richmonders of all backgrounds, as well as community leaders from across the country and from overseas, in the city's first walk through its racial history. Members of Hope in the Cities have served on Richmond's Slave Trail Commission since its inception and have helped to bring national and international recognition to previously unknown sites.

During his term of office as governor, Bob McDonnell allocated \$11 million in state funding for the Lumpkin's Jail project. The City of Richmond contributed an additional \$8 million. McDonnell told the crowd of several hundred people at the October ceremony that bricks and mortar alone cannot heal the racial divide. "What really matters is what is in the human heart. What are you going to do to make your city, your state and your nation a better place? How are you going to follow the commands of God to make this a better place and to show love for other people?"

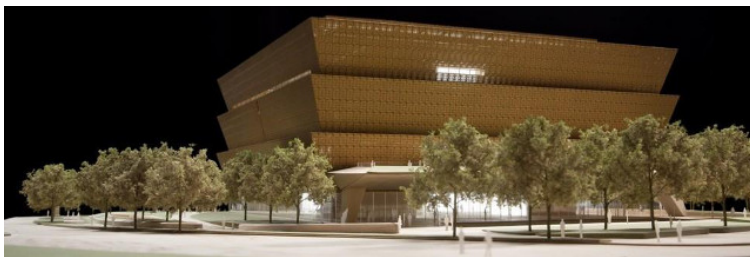
A dream realized

Dr. Margaret Smith teaches in the International Peace and Conflict Resolution program at American University's School of International Service in Washington, DC. She is the author of "Reckoning with the Past: Teaching History in Northern Ireland." In addition she studies how our connections with the past affect us as people and how they interact with conflict, for good or ill.



The opening of Washington, DC's new National Museum of African American History and Culture on Saturday, September 24, occurring as it did in the same week as police shootings of black men in Tulsa and Charlotte, captured perfectly the mixture of grief and dignified struggle that has defined the African American story.

The juxtaposition was obvious to all. We carried it inside us as we shared in the realization of a long-held dream to see the African American story honored in a central spot in our nation's capital. President Obama underlined that the museum would not cure the racial ills of the United States. But, he said, the museum's exhibits "can help us talk to each other, and more importantly listen to each other, and most importantly see each other."



The new museum, with its distinctive architecture described by the New York Times as an "inverted ziggurat," stands close to the familiar obelisk of the Washington Monument, within view of the site of Martin Luther King's 1963 "I have a dream" speech and of the statue of Abraham Lincoln that provided King his setting.

The day of the museum inauguration was a day when we thought a lot about dreams. Many who spoke that day referenced the poem of Langston Hughes

What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up
Like a raisin in the sun?
Or fester like a sore-
And then run?
Does it stink like rotten meat?
Or crust and sugar over-
Like a syrupy sweet?
Maybe it just sags
like a heavy load.
Or does it explode?

Hughes spoke for African Americans in the twentieth century. In recent years a new swath of African American writers have eloquently confronted us with the continuing deferral of African Americans' dignity in American society: Michelle Alexander (*The New Jim Crow*), Edward Baptist, (*The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism*), Ta-Nehisi Coates (*Between the World and Me*), Bryan Stevenson (*Just Mercy*), Isabel Wilkerson (*The Warmth of Other Suns*). Black Lives Matter has gotten the word out about the kind of acts that have been rife ever since the ending of slavery but that have been treated with denial and callousness.

The opening of the museum was not so much an explosion as a jubilant acknowledgment that the African American story is and always was central to the American story. The ongoing struggles make that affirmation more meaningful, give it an edge, remind us that the battle for the world we aspire to is never won, is fought daily.

And somehow or other, I, and, I believe, many, many of us, felt drawn in last Saturday, knowing we were all part of this story. The story sends out a shaft of light that pierces our ongoing protections and defenses, that brings us alive, that teaches us what it means to love and engage.

Attending a concert of spirituals at Washington's National Cathedral earlier in the week that was held in honor of the museum opening, I sat down beside a young black man and we introduced ourselves. "My name is Efram," he said. "Pronounced like A-frame," he added. I said my name was Margaret. The concert began, and I saw that Efram was looking up each of the songs on his iPhone so that he could follow the words. "Nobody knows the trouble I see," "Take my hand, precious Lord," "Swing low, sweet chariot, comin' for to carry me home" - songs of resistance, of acknowledgement of deep emotions trampled, of separation of mothers and children, of exodus, of pleas for deliverance. When the audience was welcomed to join in, Efram shared his iPhone with me. It turned out that he had been born in Ethiopia. None of these songs was familiar to him, but he wanted to know them. Leaning in towards each other, we sang the three verses of James Weldon Johnson's "Lift every voice and sing, Till earth and heaven ring, Ring with the harmonies of Liberty," reaching our heads higher for the crescendos as if we had been doing this together for all of time.

We hope you enjoyed this issue of [Trustbuilders](#). Please share this newsletter with your friends and forward it to those you know have a passion for trustbuilding.

Thank you!

Initiatives of Change, 2201 W. Broad Street, Suite 200, Richmond, VA 23220

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