

Saturday, June 16 2007

With One Hand Tied Behind Our Backs...

BUILDING
TRUST
IN AMERICA

A National
Initiatives of Change
Forum
University of Dayton
J.F.K. Union Center
June 15—16, 2007

“Look at all that this nation has accomplished with one hand tied behind our backs. Imagine what would be possible if we engaged everyone and released the other hand!” exclaimed **Judge Walter Rice** as he opened the second day of the Building Trust in America forum. Rice believes that instead of overt racism, a lack of trust, communication and relationship between races has limited every city, every effort in the country to grow and prosper. “Here in Dayton we have a brand new state of the art performing arts center, and a new sports stadium—but these are bricks and mortar. What limits us is the increasing inability to communicate across racial divides.”

Trust is the crucial missing element in the educational crisis in Dayton as a levy to raise money for Dayton Public Schools failed at the polls.

Marc Levy, president of United Way of Greater Dayton, began by stating his great sense of urgency in improving race relations in the Dayton area.

Today our challenge is to move from evaluating our community based on value, or worth, and use values, or worthiness, as a way to measure the extent of community and relationships we are building. Levy challenged the attendees to move from an attitude of “what is in it for me?”

to “what is in it for US?”

Can we be satisfied with 27% of children who don't graduate from high school? He challenged those present to imagine being satisfied if one piece of mail in four was always lost, or one in every four hospital admissions did not leave the hospital alive. We must be committed to quality education for all children without exception. No throw away children; no throw away people.

The bridge across this chasm of disintegrating communities is trust—building trust, living trust-worthy lives, and creating trust worthy communities.

“Put the public back in government and we will make things happen”, encouraged **Valerie Lemmie** former city manager of Dayton and Cincinnati. Building trust is about building relationships and we can't do that without engaging the public. “I was in Cincinnati when it was the best of times and the worst of times”, she continued. “When the worst of times makes its frustration known, the best of times is often confused.”

For government to be trusted today, it must exhibit five E's — Efficiency, Effectiveness, must be Economical, invest in social Equity, and Engage the citizens.

Don Cowles, Executive Director of Initiatives of Change spoke

of trust on a personal level.

“My wife and I made personal choices about where to raise our family and chose Richmond.” There he engaged in a mentoring program which touched and changed his life. “Toneisha, whom I mentor, is very important to me and has touched my family. Now I am a vocal, active voice in the community for the betterment of our schools.”

“Each of us has to be the leavening in every relationship we have”, explained **Clementine Lue Clarke**. “I'm in an inter-cultural marriage and I just learned that it was only 40 years ago that it became legal to be in such a relationship.

So, though much needs to be changed, a lot has already gone before. “

Clarke shared that one of the most important practices she engages in is taking quiet on a daily basis. “This tells me what I need to do that day, it guides me through decisions and helps me with patience,” she shared.

Zeke Reich, entering law school this autumn, shared his experience of “fumbling towards making a difference” in the world around him. He lifted up the challenge for those working in social justice efforts to take seriously the need to build trust with each other and not just to look to the outside world as the target audience.

“Trust building is just as hard between people in the social change movement as it is across barriers.”

The morning session ended with a presentation of the Initiatives of Change guiding values of honesty, purity, unselfishness and love, and the practice of quiet time.



Exploring the Initiatives of Change Tools for Change

The second part of the morning session was broken into five different programs, each one exploring one of the Initiatives of Change tools.

Honest Conversation:

Individuals gathered to discuss and participate in honest conversation and dialogue. Built on the principle that only honesty creates a possibility for building trust, the group wrestled with the definition of, as well whether or not they had ever actually participated in, an honest conversation.

Some comments:

The process utilized was challenging, provocative and critical.

I appreciated the open energy at this circle and the willingness of those present to participate—especially to the point of telling why they don't speak up in groups and why they don't feel it is ok to be honest.

Healing History:

History, both personal and communal, is always in the room. Understanding your own personal history and the history of groups who have had a major influence on you and your community is key to healing. In this Tools for Change workshop, participants shared stories of impact from their own lives with others in the workshop. Participants learned that sharing stories of their history with others and listening to the others' stories builds trust in at least two important ways---1) by making yourself vulnerable when you tell your story and 2) by listening to the stories of others and being willing to be impacted by what you hear. Rev. Tee Turner and Julie Marshall facilitated the healing history session. Resources for planning a history experience (i.e. the

PeaceBridge event in Dayton, OH and the Unity Walk in Richmond, VA) and the important elements to include were also shared.

Some comments:

Once again, the power of personal storytelling to create connection, build trust and create community inspired me.

I found it useful to attempt to tell one's story from the other's viewpoint.

Quiet Time and the Four Standards:

There is a need in our society to stop what we are frantically doing long enough to discover if we are even doing the right thing. Initiatives of Change advocates and lives the practice of spending reflective time in quiet connection, correction and direction.

Honesty: a constant exploration for the truth.

Purity: being pure in our motives and intentions.

Unselfishness: not closing ourselves to others in relationships.

Love: respecting the dignity of each life.

Connection is reaching out with our minds to a voice outside us that guides our paths. For many this might be seeking God's guidance.

Correction is when we take a critical look at ourselves in light of the four standards of purity, honesty, love and unselfishness to find the areas in which we are lacking. Direction has to do with

identifying steps to be taken in order to address inconsistencies we find in our lives.

About ten participants sat around a table to discuss the benefits, challenges and rewards of this process on Saturday morning. Randy Ruffin and Zeke Reich facilitated the discussion and presented the concept as a movement to fit each person's need as opposed to a set of rules.

Participants were offered a short period of time for reflection, yet their experiences were very powerful. Dr. Wayer Azmeh found that as a busy doctor, his definition of quiet was not the absence of noise, but a state of mind in which your thoughts are aligned. For him, quiet time might occur over a patient he is operating on, or simply talking to his wife on the cell phone. "We are quiet as we jog" to our different destinations, he said.

It was obvious to everyone at the table, that a true alignment within ourselves became increasingly impossible without the clarity that came from taking time to listen.

Some comments:

"Purity is the feeling of living clearly."

"During quiet time I began to see my own motives more clearly. I realized that I had had a rosy picture of myself that was not honest."

Connecting Communities Fellowship

Program:

A group gathered to learn more about Initiatives of Change training program that increases the capacity of change agents to build just and inclusive communities. They heard many statements from Connecting Communities Fellowship Program graduates about what is possible when people come together over five weekends, and build the trust necessary to have honest conversations about difficult issues, discover 'the other' and see where they need to grow to become more effective and courageous leaders.

Some comments:

One practical thing I am taking away is about involving people in the community to know more about the person and introducing problems at hand before a crisis occurs.

I have attended many trainings, facilitations, groups, etc on many to most of these topics but they are often tailored to fit a specific need or movement. It is nice that this is happening at-large and not specified.



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The Role of Trustbuilding in Community Life

Different Faiths Finding Common Ground

The causes of mistrust between religions were identified as fear, feeling that YOU have The Truth, feeling that authority or core beliefs are challenged, cultural/religious practices that are violated—often unintentionally and out of ignorance, feeling that your way of life is threatened and you are shamed if you don't defend it, and a very real historical experience.

Participants reported different steps by groups and individuals to address mistrust, including the Dayton Dialogue, the Interfaith Ministers Group in Dayton, and this IofC forum. The Dayton Dialogue between the Abrahamic faiths was also mentioned, but an Egyptian American doctor stressed the importance of going beyond talk to action and told of the free clinic being created by Jewish, Muslim and Christian doctors.

A Maltese, referring to the historic mistrust of Muslims in his country, spoke of the dialogues initiated there and of one friend who shared that “the biggest joy is a prejudice overcome.”

Participants also spoke of individual changes made or steps taken—reading “the other's” holy book, getting to know one person of another faith more deeply, a Muslim overcoming personal fears to go with a Hillel group to celebrate Rosh Hashanah at their synagogue, a Jew deciding to listen empathetically to a Palestinian Muslim without having to counter or debate.

One comment:

The challenge to work on relationships with others, such as a neighbor who I wouldn't have to speak with. Can I create a relationship with them?

Business Leaders and Grassroots Leaders: Partners in Building Community

The moderators challenged the group to think deeply about mistrust keeping corporations and grassroots from working together. The group was asked to come up with a declaration of possibility—each person could transform the relationship between business and grassroots. One statement that came out of that discussion was “possibility, people and the unity of purpose.” In other words, it is possible to change the relationship because we are all people who interact with each other and we all have the common purpose to live better lives and provide for our families.

The question: What are the things that will NOT make this relationship transformation possible? Randy Weeks from NetCrafters said, “In a world that is focused on retribution, reconciliation is a big word.” Another person followed by saying that labels such as corporations being the bad guys and grassroots being the good guys need to be eradicated.

The discussion was closed with asking each participant to thank someone in

their group for the gifts that they brought to the table, and the voice they represent.

The undeniable truth is that whether you are a corporate person or a grassroots person, we are all members of the same community and we need each other to survive.

Public Private Partnerships—Building Shared Visions for Community

This workshop focused on the complex challenges of building partnerships with multiple stakeholders. After several stories of trust building were shared, a discussion of the 2001 riots and unrest in Cincinnati became the focus for exploring these challenges. The necessity of ‘doing time’ to build working relationships and a shared vision was recognized.

Other insights included:

“the worst way to build trust is in the midst of crisis. The time to build trust is every single day before the crisis occurs.”

“I can't go into a relationship with my agenda as the predominate agenda. I must listen and understand their agenda so I can help make the match.”

“I am so impressed by the courage demonstrated in the face of your fears, not knowing the outcome. You trusted the process. You stayed there and continued the work you started. What if you had walked away?”



Education for the 21st Century—Creating Healthy Integrated Public Schools

With the failed education levy fresh in the minds of Daytonians, a group of people gathered to discuss the possibility of a better education system. Participants from Ohio and Virginia shared their experiences of failure, challenges, and success. The challenge becomes to continue pressing honest conversation between parents, education leaders and the community at-large. All must come to the significant acknowledgement that children are an asset to each member of the community.

Caux Scholars Program

Interactive participation seemed to charge up the participants in the CSP workshop. Asiya Mohammed shared an ongoing conflict in her home country of Trinidad and Tobago. Clementine Lue Clarke led the group through the process of mapping conflict, a useful tool in getting needed perspective on any conflict.

Both Clementine and Asiya are alumnae of the Caux Scholars Program, a course in conflict transformation and peacebuilding that has taken place for

fifteen summers in the Initiatives of Change center in Caux, Switzerland.

The program is for international students from ages 20 to 35. Please go to our website for information about how to apply for this program.

One comment from a participant at the workshop:

I got an analytical mapping process that I can now take back home to share with others.



Thank you for participating in this forum. If you would like to be involved in other Initiatives of Change programs, please contact us at:

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