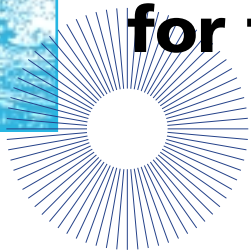


Boston Research Center for the 21st Century

NEWSLETTER : SPRING/SUMMER 2004 : NUMBER 22



Janine Benyus gestures to images of organisms as she urged the audience to "Listen to the experts!"

BRC CELEBRATES TEN YEARS OF COMMITMENT TO PEACE



THE CENTER celebrated a decade of peacework in September 2003 with a 10th Anniversary conference entitled *Re-imagining Self, Other, and the Natural World* cosponsored by the Center for Respect of Life and the Environment and the Harvard-Yenching Institute. The inspiration for the conference came from Principle 16f of the Earth Charter:

"Recognize that peace is the wholeness created by right relationships with oneself, other persons, other cultures, other life, Earth, and the larger whole of which we all are a part."

With this in mind, three philosophies of interconnectedness were explored through a range of speakers, *continued on page 12*

RACHEL CARSON LECTURE LOOKS TO GENIUS OF NATURE



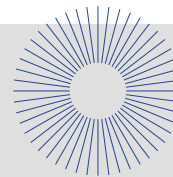
"WE LOST OUR WAY," science writer Janine M. Benyus told the audience of more than 160 people assembled to hear the Rachel Carson Lecture on Environmental Ethics in late February at the BRC. "Tonight I want to talk about how we're finding our way back."

The author of *Biomimicry: Innovation Inspired by Nature* (1997) delivered the third lecture in the Women of Courage Lecture Series cosponsored by the Boston Research Center for the 21st Century and the Wellesley Centers for Women. Her remarks focused on the wisdom of nature and adapting nature's best ideas for human use to enhance life on Earth. They were introduced by BRC president

Masao Yokota in a spirit of respect, hope, and conviction: "This dialogue is a way of changing a century of war to a century of peace."

Virginia Straus, BRC executive director, reflected on the life and environmental accomplishments of the "fountainhead of the environmental movement," Rachel Carson, who was "a revolutionary spokesperson for the rights of all life." Both Janine Benyus, who would be inspired by Carson and would follow in her footsteps, and Rachel Carson had a single mentor: Nature.

In a magazine article that Rachel Carson later turned into a book, *continued on page 8*



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OCTOBER 1-2, 2004: THE INAUGURAL IKEDA FORUM FOR INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE



The Center's 10th Anniversary conference, *Re-imagining Self, Other, and the Natural World*, led to an unexpected result: re-imagining the Center's basic mission. Our first ten years involved an exploration of multiple religious and cultural perspectives on four fundamental values: human rights, environmental ethics, nonviolence, and economic justice. Through public conferences and books designed for college use, we engaged in an exciting process of networking, learning, and sharing.

This first leg of our journey has set the stage for deeper inquiry, an inquiry that has taken on even greater urgency as the U.S. leads the world into an ever-escalating "war on terrorism." Where does the BRC go from here? Certainly, learning to coexist creatively with the "other" lies at the heart of the matter. With this in mind, we explored the philosophy and practice of interconnectedness at our 10th Anniversary gathering last year and were impressed with Eastern, feminist, and indigenous understandings about the interdependence of all life. We decided it was time to redraw the Center's mission statement.

After much deliberation, we arrived at our new focus: to cultivate an inclusive sense of community — locally and globally — through education, dialogue, connection, and practice. To begin, we will convene a small group of community builders locally to create an ongoing community of practice from which we hope will emerge reflections that can be shared more widely. The *BRC Learning Circle on Community-Building*, as it evolves, will be chronicled on our website.

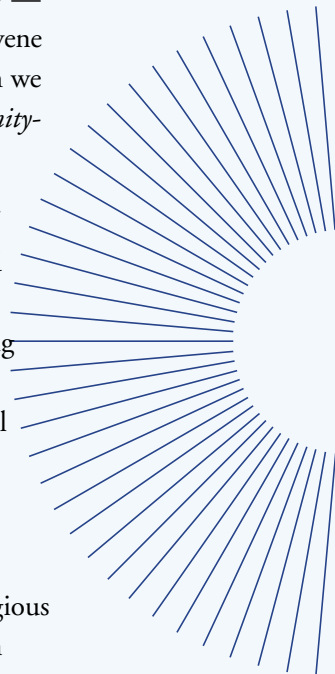
Our next public event moves from local to global community-building with the launch this fall of a new annual program, the Ikeda Forum for Intercultural Dialogue. The first in a series, scheduled for October 1st and 2nd and entitled *Reawakening East-West Connections: Walden and Beyond*, is a natural choice, since the Center's founder, Buddhist teacher Daisaku Ikeda, has had a long-standing interest in, and affinity for, Emerson, Thoreau, and the American Transcendentalists. The series honors Dr. Ikeda's three-plus decades of extraordinary global effort, building bridges across cultural divides through open-hearted dialogue. I hope you will join us to learn more about why and how the Transcendentalists looked eastward as they enlarged their spiritual vision, and to discover their legacy that lives on today.

By January 2005, our book development program will have officially shifted gears from multi-religious perspectives on global ethics to hands-on peace education with the publication, in association with Teachers College Press, of *Educating Global Citizens* (working title). This new book will suggest ways that, even amidst all the emphasis on testing in American secondary schools, students can be inspired to engage in profound thinking about what it means to be globally-minded, globally-connected, and globally-responsible.

Early next year, our fourth annual Women of Courage Lecture will honor the great liberator, Harriet Tubman. Alternating venues as we do with our cosponsor, the 2005 lecture will be held at Wellesley College.

As we set sail toward our newly re-imagined mission, I find my own aspirations reflected eloquently in the words of Chilean biologist Humberto Maturana: "I want to contribute to a work of art in the domain of human existence. I want to evoke a manner of coexistence in which love, mutual respect, honesty, and social responsibility arise spontaneously, instant after instant." (www.inteco.cl/articulos/metadesign.htm)

Virginia Straus, Executive Director





EDUCATING FOR LIFELONG LEARNING

Our whole policy of compulsory education rises or falls with our ability to make school life an interesting and absorbing experience to the child. In one sense there is no such thing as compulsory education. We can have compulsory physical attendance at school; but education comes only through willing attention to and participation in school activities.

JOHN DEWEY wrote these words in 1913 in *Interest and Effort in Education*. Ninety years later, the great challenge of educators remains how to engage students in meaningful, stimulating ways that will enrich their lives and foster a lifelong interest in learning. Unfortunately, today's fast-paced and fragmented curriculum, which is often tied to high stakes tests, flies in the face of cultivating a sense of purpose or interest in learning. This, as Dewey would say, limits the ability of students to become lifelong learners.

American education has mimicked society's obsession with speed, efficiency, and convenience — from 20 minute lunches to timed tests. Could the sheer pace of our framework for learning be robbing students of the joy of learning? Can learning occur when broken up into units and lesson plans by subjects, topics, and sub-topics, and taught in 40-50 minute time blocks? When did we decide to tailor lessons to time blocks, rather than to student interests or needs?

Among the antidotes to fast-paced learning are long-term projects that engage students in slow, meaningful experiences. The Edible Schoolyard Project at the Martin Luther King Junior Middle School in Berkeley, California, is an excellent example of long-duration, project-based learning.

A little over an acre of asphalt pavement from an abandoned lot near the School was cleared and planted with a cover crop to enrich the soil in preparation for a garden. Then the School's 70 year-old kitchen cafeteria was converted into a kitchen-classroom. The project involved years of planning, with students designing the final garden in collaboration with a garden manager. Each year students plant an organic garden, tend it, harvest the food, and then prepare it in the kitchen, from "seed to table." Students learn not only about nature and ecology, they learn to work together in an ongoing effort that spans years.

Another good example occurred two years ago at the Fayerweather Street School in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Students and staff decided to build a small house on their playground. The entire school community was involved in the process, from drawing up design plans to building the structure. Students, staff, and parents held weekly meetings as part of the "Little House Design Group." The project took about a year to complete from design to construction.

Students not only learned about building design and carpentry, they learned about collaboration, cooperation, and being part of a larger community.

Another example of a long-term experiential project involved Fayerweather students creating their own school handbook and school rules. Students learned first-hand about participatory democracy. They are also far more apt to observe those rules because they created them, than to observe rules created and imposed on them by administrators.

Projects like these teach real life lessons in building community and in learning how to work together to achieve common goals. Such projects are likely to have lasting effects on students because they involve real experiences, long-term commitments, and active student participation. In short, they take time and create a real opportunity for students to make connections, trace cause and effect relationships, and create something that matters. As educators, our job is to find ways to tap into the natural curiosity and interests of students. Slowing down the process long enough to involve them physically, emotionally, and intellectually in their own learning increases the likelihood that the educational experience will be lasting and meaningful.

— *Eric Olick*

**Re-Awakening East-West Connections:
Walden and Beyond**

THE IKEDA FORUM FOR INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE

**Friday evening and Saturday all day
October 1-2, 2004**

We will trace connections between the life philosophies of Transcendentalism and Eastern wisdom traditions, and explore the relevance today of the unconventional approaches to lifelong learning and insight pioneered by the Transcendentalists.

Watch for your flyer in the mail!



2004 PEACE PROPOSAL CONNECTS GLOBAL SECURITY AND GLOBAL AWARENESS



THE “INDISCRIMINATE VIOLENCE” that has characterized the beginning of the twenty-first century is the point of departure for Daisaku Ikeda’s 2004 Peace Proposal, *Inner Transformation: Creating a Global Groundswell for Peace*. As Ikeda explains, the impact of such violence, combined with the ever-present threat of nuclear and chemical weapons, affects the hearts and minds of people worldwide. Furthermore, he points to the divisions within nations, and within the international community, that have become sharper as the war in Iraq continues. “The signal failure of military action to produce a clear prospect for peace has left many people with suffocating feelings of powerlessness and dread,” Ikeda states.

Considering the failure of “hard power” to resolve conflict and make the world safe, Ikeda proposes a

humanistic approach centered on individual responsibility and connection with others: “No efforts will gain the wholehearted support of people or succeed in bringing about lasting stability and peace without a spirit of self-mastery based on an acute awareness of the humanity of others — something that I consider to be the very essence of civilization.”

He defines “self-mastery” as a quality that grows within a person from the effort to “consider and understand the position of the ‘other.’” It is this effort, based on a deep interest and awareness of the ‘other,’ that must take precedence over “hard power.” And it is this effort that must be combined with “the courage and the vision to address the underlying conditions of poverty and injustice,” if we are to overcome the current climate of terrorism.

“It is vital that all parties reflect on their failings in the recent past and find a renewed commitment to constructive dialogue. All should join in the search for the kind of approach that will constitute not symptomatic treatment, but fundamental cure,” Ikeda says. “What is needed is not simply to repeat universal principles, that freedom and democracy are the fruits of civilization, for example. Our words need to be grounded in the spirit of self-mastery, the willingness to learn from the example of others and correct our behavior accordingly.”

To receive a complimentary copy of the 2004 Peace Proposal, contact the publications office of the Boston Research Center at 617-491-1090 or email us at pubs@brc21.org.



FAREWELL TO LEETA WHITE



WHEN LEETA WHITE joined the BRC Publications Department as publications assistant in 2000, she was a graduate student at Lesley University and a novice at marketing academic books,

tracking course adoptions, preparing sales reports, and juggling the demands of a fast-paced publications office. Earlier this year, she completed her Master of Arts in Intercultural Communications and, well, let’s just say she has learned to juggle.

“This has been an incredible learning experience,” Leeta said, as she looked back on her years at the Center. “I’ve had the opportunity to get to know some very special people and take part in some amazing events that have heightened my awareness about what is going on in the world.”

Knowing Leeta has been “an incredible learning experience” for the BRC, as well. She is a talented musician, a film buff, and a yellow belt in Tae Kwon Do. A true global citizen, Leeta has traveled to Africa, India, and Guatemala in the past few years and come back with insights

and souvenirs that will long be remembered. Her sensitivity to intercultural issues, which she has developed by working with international au pairs and their host families, has contributed to many lively discussions at the BRC lunch table. At the same time, her energy, wit, and knowledge of popular American culture has kept us informed on everything from iPods to Reality TV.

As Leeta makes a career move to New York City, she leaves a circle of friends throughout the BRC community. We wish her the very best, and know you do, too.



RESOURCES FOR ALL SEASONS AT WWW.BRC21.ORG



HAVE YOU VISITED www.brc21.org lately? If so, you've noticed how the BRC website has expanded to include a wide range of educational resources for thinkers, activists, and teachers at all levels. You'll still find this newsletter in .pdf format, up-to-date information on events, and order forms for BRC books. But in addition, we've been busy adding interviews, articles, and other online-only materials for your personal or classroom use. A selection of our online resources is summarized below. Please explore them soon, and help us spread the word by telling a friend. Please keep an eye on these and other resources by bookmarking www.brc21.org on your computer. It is a pleasure for us to connect with so many global citizens through this powerful medium.

10th Anniversary Summary

www.brc21.org/tenth/

JOIN US for a two-day exploration of indigenous, Eastern, and relational philosophies and practices of interdependence in an in-depth summary and video excerpts of our 10th Anniversary conference, *Re-Imagining Self, Other, and the Natural World*. Enhanced by color photos and speaker bios, this three-part overview addresses many aspects of peace-work and sets the tone for the next era of BRC programs. Among those quoted in the online summary is BRC founder, Daisaku Ikeda, whose 10th anniversary message included a reminder that "Open dialogue is the only way peaceful coexistence will occur; it will transform prejudice to understanding, mistrust to empathy, and conflict to harmony."

Restorative Justice Seminar Series

www.brc21.org/resources/restore_justice/restore_justice.html

IN THE SPRING OF 2003, the BRC held several seminars exploring the growing field of Restorative Justice. Through a series of interviews with and reflections from a selected group of local practitioners, these informative sessions touched upon issues relating to trauma, crime, and healing. The participants' areas of expertise varied from local community-building to international conflict resolution. In her interview entitled *Redefining Justice*, Dr. Carolyn Boyes-Watson, director of Suffolk University's Center for Restorative Justice, aptly described the restorative approach as one focused on "who is responsible for repairing the harm and what is needed to address the harm."

Curriculum Resources for Global Citizenship Education

www.brc21.org/resources/res_crgce.html

IN CONJUNCTION with our forthcoming book *Educating for Global Citizenship* (working title), the BRC has developed a list of over 30 programs (many web-based) for educators at the High School and Middle School levels. This resource provides descriptions of progressive curricula and summarizes available tools, guides, and teacher training opportunities. We've also listed contact information and links to organizational websites in an effort to connect you with alternative approaches to teaching and learning.

Perspectives on Terrorism and Nonviolence

www.brc21.org/resources/res_cmnt.html

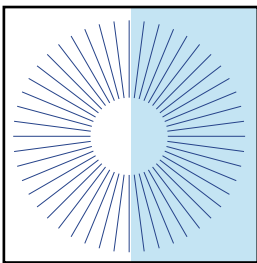
SHORTLY AFTER September 11, 2001, the Center created a webspace devoted to commentaries often unavailable through mainstream media outlets. In the Resources section of the BRC site, we began collecting articles and essays by Arun Gandhi, Barbara Kingsolver, Daisaku Ikeda, and a host of others. What developed over a period of two years has become a rich resource of several hundred articles that have now been used in college and university classrooms, as well as by individuals. While we have ceased to update the *Perspectives* page in order to focus all our energy on other BRC programs, this resource remains easily accessible by date and author.

Tsunesaburo Makiguchi: A Bibliography

www.brc21.org/resources/res_makiguchi.html

THE MOST RECENT addition to the BRC's online resources is a bibliography highlighting works by and about Tsunesaburo Makiguchi (1871-1944), a Japanese educator. A relentless advocate of student-centered teaching, Makiguchi pushed for education reform in 1930s Imperialist Japan. He felt strongly that "The realization of happiness is the primary purpose of education and all educational plans and programs must begin with this basic understanding." Makiguchi founded a lay Buddhist association (Soka Gakkai International), which is currently active in 187 countries and territories. His theory of value-creating pedagogy inspired a series of K-12 schools in Japan, Malaysia, and Hong Kong, as well as universities in Japan and the United States.

— Kevin Maher



MAKING THE WORLD WITH SAYRA PINTO



SAYRA PINTO is an advocate for social justice and the former director of the VIA Project, a unique “street school” of Roca, Inc., a community-building organization in Chelsea, Massachusetts. Sayra’s childhood in Honduras and youth as an immigrant teenager in America helped to prepare her for her career. She is a graduate of Middlebury College and attended graduate school in Spanish language and literature. Sayra was interviewed by BRC publications manager Patti Marxsen.

PM: Tell me about your childhood.

SP: I was raised in Honduras and left by my mother when I was two. I was born out of a rape so there was a lot of drama and trauma around my birth.

PM: What are your first memories?

SP: When I was about three or four I was at the ocean in an inflatable inner tube. I looked down into the water and I fell into the ocean. It was deeper than I thought, so I ended up at the bottom and no one noticed.

PM: How did you get back to the top?

SP: I remember sitting on the bottom of the ocean and looking up at the sun. I remember the sand and water and emptiness. I looked up and I realized that I couldn’t breathe and I didn’t know what to do. Then I heard the voice that said, “Calm down.”

PM: Calm down?

SP: Yes, because I was starting to panic. I heard a woman’s voice say, “Calm down.” Then she told me to stand up and I stood up. She told me

to move my arms and I moved my arms and finally she told me to just reach up.

PM: It wasn’t an actual person calling to you?

SP: No.

PM: Do you believe in angels?

SP: I believe in spirits. I believe that we are not alone.

PM: What was your home like?

SP: I have a brother who grew up with me and three cousins, who were also left by their parents. We lived in grandma’s house. My aunt was a nurse so she worked to sustain the household. We grew up in a lower middle-class neighborhood in a town that developed around the banana plantations. It’s a mile away from the airport where all the U.S. planes were landing, loaded with weapons that poured into Honduras to help control what was happening in Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala. Honduras is a very strategic place for the United States so there has always been this militarized presence.

PM: How did the civil wars going on around Honduras affect daily life?

SP: There were refugees. There was also a clear investment in making sure that Honduras didn’t go towards the left. That meant a lot of social control; people lived in fear. For example, we didn’t have freedom of the press until 1992.

PM: How did you experience this atmosphere as a child?

SP: There was a fair amount of violence in the community and because I grew up in a household with no men, it was a vulnerable household. I am a survivor of sexual abuse and rape. The educational system was very controlling as well. I have always been a little bit of a rule breaker, so I experienced a lot of punishment around freedom of expression.

PM: Your grandmother, Herminia Pinto, was the center of your household. What did you learn from her that has helped you in your adult life?

SP: She was in a wheelchair, so we had to find a way to take care of grandma every day. But she created a sense of connection that we otherwise would not have had.



I think my cultural background helped me be open and remain innocent for a very long time because of our appreciation of the sacredness of each being.

.....

PM: It's interesting that a person who might be considered helpless would provide the connection that kept you all together.

SP: She was indigenous, and we were growing up in an environment where things were changing. She was almost like the voice of the elders for us. She commanded respect.

PM: Did you go to church?

SP: My brother and I ended up in a Catholic school; there were many dynamics that were really painful about that because we were orphans and there was a perception of orphans as damned.

PM: When did you learn the story of how your mother rejected you and, ultimately, abandoned you because you were a child of rape?

SP: I was 24 when my mother told me.

PM: You were 12 years old when you came to the United States to be reunited with your mother. Then you migrated to the Boston area where you had other family members. What special problems have you faced as a Latin-American woman in American society?

SP: "Latin-American" refers to such a varied group of people. You have people who have legal status and people who don't. You have people who become citizens and people who are born citizens. Then you have cultural differences, depending on where you come from. For example, Central-American people are deeply connected to their indigenous inheritance, and there are some fundamental differences in the way indigenous people move through their lives, as opposed to Western ways of moving through life. Values are different, families are different. It's not necessarily about political practice, but about simple ways of being.

PM: Can you share an example?

SP: Central-American culture is very formal and relies on an honor system. In Latino-Caribbean culture, people are far more relational. People tend to feel more connected if they have fun together, as opposed to very formal ways of building relationships. There is a real clash because of that. You might be really nice and you might have a lot of fun, but that doesn't mean you are gaining respect and prestige in a community where formality matters more than fun.

PM: How have your own indigenous origins helped or hindered your adaptation to American culture?

SP: I think my cultural background helped me be open and remain innocent for a very long time because of our appreciation of the sacredness of each being. I don't believe my cultural background hindered any adaptation process, though American culture's trend of intolerance, xenophobia, and rejection has damaged me . . . and continue to exert pressure on me as I keep choosing to remain open, versus materialistic, untrusting, and judgmental of people in this country. I think I feel this pressure most when I make decisions based on principles and values versus personal gain.

PM: And yet you feel committed to carving out a place for yourself, and for your people.

SP: Yes, because the world needs us. Us, from the heart out. This is risky because we have had to learn to hide to save ourselves from the savage actions of people who are part of American culture and subscribe to the idea of Western expansion. Yet, given the state of the world, it's also risky not to unleash our voices, our hearts, and our hopes. So we are walking a tightrope, along with the rest of the world.



Mentors are important because they can help young people to sustain a sense of newness about the world and, so, to maximize their creativity.
.....

PM: Does being a woman make a difference when it comes to cultural adaptation?

SP: Within my immediate family and cultural milieu, I've had to justify being publicly engaged because the proper women's role is private in my culture. The other complication is that I am openly lesbian. My family has reflected upon my experience and translated that into their lives. It has brought us closer and this has made them happier in their own personal lives. The women in the family, and even my brother, have become more free as a result of my coming out. It's been liberating for them.

PM: In so many ways it sounds as if you are leading your family along the path. You are the trailblazer.

SP: It's a more complex picture than that. I think each of the five of us who grew up in my grandmother's house and then came to this country is trying to figure life out. As we do this, we are liberating the elders in our family.

PM: Who have been your mentors, and do you think it's important for young people to have mentors?

SP: My fourth grade teacher was the first man who treated me kindly and who encouraged me to use my voice. The aunt who raised me was in love with her work and was passionate about helping others, so I learned

continued on page 10



Susan McGee Bailey, director of the Wellesley Centers for Women, participates in the group discussion following the lecture.

Rachel Carson Lecture Looks to Genius of Nature

continued from page 1

The Sense of Wonder, the preeminent environmentalist wrote: “A child’s world is fresh and new and beautiful, full of wonder and excitement. It is our misfortune that for most of us that clear-eyed vision, that true instinct for what is beautiful and

“We are surrounded by genius. And there are clues everywhere in the 30 million species willing to gift us with their best ideas.”
— Janine Benyus

awe-inspiring, is dimmed and even lost before we reach adulthood . . . If I had influence with the good fairy who is supposed to preside over the christening of all children I should ask that her gift to each child in the world be a sense of wonder so indestructible that it would last through life, as an unfailing antidote against the boredom and disenchantment of

later years, the sterile preoccupation with things that are artificial, the alienation from the sources of our strength.” Both Carson and Benyus have been gifted with the ability to experience wonder and to communicate to others the beauties of Nature that inspire wonder.

Susan McGee Bailey, executive director of the Wellesley Centers for Women, confided that she could not help but think of her own mother on this evening. Her mother was always environmentally sensitive, and she would have loved the opportunity to honor Janine Benyus as a woman of courage and an environmental activist. Reflecting on her mother’s love of Nature, Bailey quoted her as having said, “There’s no need to interfere with Nature. Just find ways to work with what is in front of you.” Likening this spirit to that of Rachel Carson and Janine Benyus, Bailey welcomed the speaker.

“I am honored to be mentioned in the same breath with Rachel Carson,” Janine Benyus said. “I go to her for guidance. She taught me to be brave enough to put poetry into science writing.”

As she showed slides of organisms of all sizes and shapes, Benyus spoke of biomimicry as a guide “to find our way home.” She stated firmly that “We need the ideas of the winged, the furred, the four-legged, the single-celled. In order to be open to their ideas, it takes a change of heart and stance.” She has no doubt that we can live on Earth and enhance Earth, adapting to it rather than depleting it. After all, she declared, “We are nature. We’re trying to figure out how to live gracefully here.”

Among the questions Janine Benyus placed before her listeners was this fundamental one: Is our technology well-adapted or mal-adapted for life on Earth over the long haul? As she discussed her slides of Nature’s wonders in the ecosystem, the author underscored one of her themes: “There are clues everywhere we look. Living well in place: this is what these organisms know how to do.” She observed that we have to learn not just *about* Nature but *from* it. We must learn to borrow Nature’s own strategies. We could, for example, learn from the structure of plants and end by building better “skins” for our buildings. We could look to slugs, which travel on slime that they continually create, to learn about lubricants. Nature itself will lead us to better designs for filtration systems, if we will simply take the time to decipher what she has to teach.

There are three levels to biomimicry, Benyus indicated. We mimic form and ask: What’s the design? We mimic process and ask: How is it made? We mimic ecosystems and ask: How does it fit? Further, she said, “We have to learn to mimic at a community level.”

Life thrives, the author reminded her audience, in surprising ways. If we are diligent students of Nature,

we can learn to clean without detergents, to color without dyes, and to operate pumps, fans, propellers, mixers, and turbines without friction. We can learn to make objects adhere without glue, and we can learn what the abalone has to teach us so that we can make ceramics as tough as the mother-of-pearl of the abalone. We can learn to make fiber optics that self-assemble. If we learn bio-production, we can move away from an oil economy. From the prairies, we can learn how to grow a variety of species on the same plot of land. “We are surrounded by genius,” Benyus said. “And there are clues everywhere in the 30 million species willing to gift us with their best ideas.”

“The more we function like the natural world, the more likely we are to fit in,” the founder of the Biomimicry Guild declared. Using Nature as a model, we must learn to ask: What would Nature do? What wouldn’t Nature do? Why? Why not?

Janine Benyus reminded the audience of Yeats’s observation that “the world is full of magic things patiently waiting for our senses to grow sharper.” She concluded her remarks by returning to her mentor, Rachel Carson: “She woke us up and gave us hope.”

To provide a bridge from Benyus’s lecture, *Echoing Nature: Lessons for a Sustainable Future*, to the question and answer portion of the evening, Sarah Conn, director of the Ecopsychology Institute, provided a guided reflection on connecting with the web of life. She suggested the audience reflect on the ways in which we can know ourselves as part of the whole.

When asked about political action and biomimicry, Benyus asserted that we should not look to other species for our moral bearing because we are

a very different kind of organism. What biomimicry provides is a set of strategies for survival and an awareness of limits. As she says, toward the end of her book: “Restraint is not a popular notion in a society addicted to ‘growing’ the economy, but it is one of the most powerful practices we can adopt at this point in history ... we are ultimately dependent on the existing natural pattern, *a pattern that we only partially understand.*”

The author welcomed personal discussions with guests as she signed copies of *Biomimicry* after the lecture.



Janine Benyus

Like Rachel Carson, Janine M. Benyus has sounded a wake-up call for all of us and has become a spokesperson for another way of *seeing* and of *being* that is guided directly by Nature.

— Helen Marie Casey



WHAT IS BIOMIMICRY?



NATURE AS MODEL

Biomimicry is a new science that studies nature’s models and then imitates or takes inspiration from these designs and processes to solve human problems, e.g., a solar cell inspired by a leaf.

NATURE AS MENTOR

Biomimicry uses an ecological standard to judge the “rightness” of our innovations. After 3.8 billion years of evolution, nature has learned: What works. What is appropriate. What lasts.

NATURE AS MEASURE

Biomimicry is a new way of viewing and valuing nature. It introduces an era based not on what we can extract from the natural world, but on what we can learn from it.

— From *Biomimicry: Innovation Inspired by Nature*, Janine Benyus (1997)

For further information, go to www.biomimicry.org. For an in-depth summary of the lecture, go to the 2004 Events section of www.brc21.org.

Guest Interview

continued from page 7

from her to take the harder journey for peace of mind. Molly Baldwin, Roca's executive director, helped me understand the price of leadership and dedication to those who are at the margins of our society. And Bud Tackett, Judy Brown, and Grandmother Georgina Larocque ushered me into a new understanding of the indigenous in all of us, and into the courage it takes to be value-driven and faith-based. I have been very blessed by all their contributions to my life. Mentors are important because they can help young people to sustain a sense of newness about the world and, so, to maximize their creativity.

PM: In addition to the wonderful mentors you just mentioned, there is something about your character or your spiritual outlook that allowed you to open yourself to all the positive changes that have come about for you. What do you think that something is?

SP: I had a very strong base with my aunt and with school. School was very important. Then there's also this sense of having been meant to do great things. I don't know where that came from but it has always been there.

PM: Let's talk about your work with the VIA Project. First of all, what is it?

SP: The best way to explain it is to say it's a street school that no one can get kicked out of, a learning space for gang members and street kids. VIA stands for *vision, intention, action*. It offers a continuum of learning capacity from the street to the classroom and to work.

PM: How did you get kids off the street and into a classroom?

SP: It's a long process depending on trauma, substance abuse issues, learning styles, skills, street involvement. You have to build relationships first



*I would not say I am
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.....

and then, little by little, we ask people to think about what they need to do for themselves.

PM: What have you learned about empowering young people?

SP: It's about listening and being open and loving them. It's about doing what you say you are going to do, so they can trust you and learn to trust themselves.

PM: Yes, but what are you empowering them for?

SP: I would not say I am "empowering youth." I am sharing my journey with young people and they are sharing and enriching mine. Young people are making choices all the time and most of them want to live. They want to know what clean air is, and water, and earth. They want to see animals and be connected to the life of this planet. They need adults to walk with them and share knowledge, stories, love, and compassion, so they can learn how to sustain the world in the future.

PM: What will the next step on your journey be?

SP: I'm inviting various communities to launch a new organization that will focus at first on Latino youth development and the use of indigenous practices for community building. Ideally, it will become a learning ground for other communities. We're calling it the Praxis Project. Praxis is a word coined by my biggest intellectual mentor, Paulo Freire, to depict the process where theory and practice merge.

PM: You have said that if you were not doing what you do now, you would be a professor of literature. What purpose does literature serve in the world?

SP: I think of it as a repository of memory. I'm really fascinated with the connection between time and space in literature. That comes from Mikhail Bakhtin, who spent the bulk of his life in prison in Siberia. His idea of a novel has to do with carnival. When you have a society where you have carnival, everything gets suspended for the purpose of the carnival. The sense of time and order and social customs get suspended for the activities of carnival. One of the things that happens in carnival is that under-the-surface expressions of culture come to the surface and are expressed in very dramatic, artistic, and theatrical ways. Think of Mardi Gras in New Orleans or of carnivals in the Caribbean islands and just in general. You have a suspension of the norm. Yet, the things that inhabit carnival are the most real of all things, and the true impulses of human nature come out in the mix. The novel is really one of the few spaces that reminds me of community space because, although measured in its intent, source, and form, the life of the novel extends beyond ordinary frameworks and interacts differently in the minds of both reader(s) and author(s). This effect reminds me very much of the nature of ongoing life in community, where change occurs also in relationship to time/space dynamics. This creates a baseline instability that extends beyond whatever systems of monitoring, policing, or control the government and/or any other institutions place upon these very fluid networks.

PM: If you could put a message in the pocket of every kid on the planet, what would it say?

SP: You make the world.



BOOK TALK

Teachers College Press to Publish BRC's Forthcoming Book

WHAT IS GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP? Is it primarily a matter of economics? How can we protect the Earth as our home and that of future generations? What sort of diversity should we try to preserve, and can we encourage unity while we maintain diversity? What role should peace education play in cultivating global citizenship?

These are the key questions addressed in Nel Noddings' Introduction to *Educating Global Citizens* (working title), the Center's forthcoming book to be available from Teachers College Press in January 2005. With the help of seven other scholars and practitioners, Noddings leads a provocative inquiry that seeks to define and describe the many facets of global citizenship education. While words like "citizen" and "citizenship" once referred to national identity, global citizenship refers to common problems, universal values, and a deep awareness of others vital to human flourishing in a global society. Is it the responsibility of teachers to "teach" the values of global citizenship? If so, how should we go about this? And what is at stake if we don't?

While the underlying thesis of *Educating Global Citizens* is that we need to educate young people for new kinds of citizenship, there are many questions to explore. As BRC executive director Virginia Straus points out in her Preface, the intention is that "this book support teachers in awakening young Americans to genuine global concerns." With that in mind, the contributors hope to open

a conversation with the future beginning with the chapters listed below:

INTRODUCTION —

Global Citizenship: Promises and Problems by Nel Noddings

1. Gender Perspectives on Educating for Global Citizenship by Peggy McIntosh
2. The Integration of Conflict Resolution into the High School Curriculum: The Example of Workable Peace by Stacie Nicole Smith and David Fairman
3. Place-Based Education to Preserve the Earth and its People by Nel Noddings
4. Differing Concepts of Citizenship: Schools and Communities as Sites of Civic Development by Gloria Ladson-Billings
5. Incorporating Internationalism into the Social Studies Curriculum by Stephen J. Thornton
6. A Letter To Secondary Teachers: Teaching About Religious Pluralism in the Public Schools by Robert J. Nash
7. A Changing Vision of Education by Nancy Carlsson-Paige and Linda Lantieri

CONCLUSION —

What Have We Learned? by Nel Noddings

To learn more about this forthcoming book and global citizenship education, keep these links in mind:

- Book order information: www.brc21.org/books.html
- Complimentary examination copies: www.brc21.org/books.html
- A free directory of Curriculum Resources for Global Citizenship Education and Suggested Reading for Global Citizenship Education: www.brc21.org/Resources.html

BRC Books Reach a Milestone

WITH THE SPRING OF 2004, BRC books have been used as supplemental reading in 200 or more college and university courses in the United States. While our "bestseller" has been *Subverting Hatred: The Challenge of Nonviolence in Religious Traditions*, edited by Daniel Smith-Christopher, other recent titles like *Subverting Greed: Religious Perspectives on the Global Economy*, edited by Paul F. Knitter and Chandra Muzaffar, and *Buddhist Peacework*, edited by David W. Chappell, are catching up. Please consider adding these books to the reading list for *your* next course. Complimentary examination copies can be requested at www.brc21.org/books.html.

Looking Forward: Future Book to Focus on Educational Philosophy

IN KEEPING WITH the Center's commitment to global citizenship education, we are currently conceptualizing a book on educational philosophy from an international perspective entitled *Philosophy in Action: International Explorations in Educational Philosophy* (working title). Starting with the view that ideas about education have a broad and long-term impact on all aspects of society, we plan to explore how educational philosophy has shaped our global society through the life and work of major twentieth-century philosophers of education. Furthermore, how each philosopher's worldview was shaped by personal experience will be explored with an emphasis on moral character. By considering the experience of an international selection of individuals—including American, European, African, and Asian—and by speaking to the inner life of educators, this volume will help teachers rethink their role as leaders and mentors in an ever-changing world.



Ginny Straus welcomes an audience of over 150 to the opening session of the 10th Anniversary conference.

BRC Celebrates 10 Years of Commitment to Peace

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activities, and conversations: Eastern religious traditions, relational psychology (as developed at the Stone Center, Wellesley College), and indigenous cultures. In keeping with the tradition and vision established at the BRC a decade ago, open-hearted dialogue was the framework for this event, in which over 150 people participated. The summary below provides highlights of each session. For an in-depth summary and photos, please go to www.brc21.org/tenth/.

Friday Evening, September 26, 2003 Eastern Traditions

AFTER WELCOME REMARKS by BRC President, Masao Yokota, Professor Steven C. Rockefeller gave a talk entitled “Interconnectedness in Action: Emerging Global Ethics.” Referring to the Earth Charter as a “declaration of ethics for an interdependent world,” Rockefeller addressed the organic interconnection of self, other, and nature that is woven into the Earth Charter.

BRC Executive Director, Virginia Straus, then offered a Buddhist perspective on interconnectedness in

theory and practice. She began by observing that the key question is how can human beings today make the “change of heart and mind” that the Earth Charter calls for in its last section entitled “The Way Forward.”

Tu Weiming, director of the Harvard-Yenching Institute, shared his understanding of the Confucian perspective. Confucians, he explained, become “co-creators of the cosmic process” because they believe that all actions, however personal, are connected to the world.

Sarah Conn, who works in the field of ecopsychology, led the audience in an experiential exercise

inspired by Joanna Macey designed to bring those present in touch with the web of life.

Saturday Morning, September 27, 2003 Relational Psychology

JAN SURREY of the Stone Center at Wellesley College introduced the session by explaining the importance of locating the development of a psychology of women within a larger context. She further emphasized the importance of understanding the “larger cultural surround of all relationships” in order to understand how people define their relationships. As she spoke of interconnection and disconnection, she said that “In many ways, our dominant culture is a culture of disconnection.”

Christina Robb spoke of how the theorists at the Stone Center came to recognize that their experience as mothers, daughters, sisters, friends, and many other roles was always the experience of being in relationship and never of being unrelated to others. Her presentation summarized Jean Baker Miller’s explanation of five characteristics of healthy relationships and addressed the importance of empathy.



Steven Rockefeller responds to a question on the Earth Charter.



Jan Surrey of the Stone Center spoke about relational psychology.

Labor union organizer Kris Rondeau spoke to the practical applications of relational-cultural theory inherent in her experience of helping to build the Harvard Union of Clerical and Technical Workers (HUCTW). Rondeau alluded to the influence on her own work of the nonviolence movement and the work of Jean Baker Miller and Jan Surrey. After a stirring narrative of her experiences at Harvard and with the University of Massachusetts Medical Center in Worcester, Massachusetts, she stated that “A union becomes a web of interconnected relationships and a safe haven for workers.”

Jan Surrey followed Rondeau’s presentation with a talk focused on how people work through disconnections. She framed the key question as follows: “If we are all fundamentally connected, and connection is our most basic yearning, how did we get where we are? And how do we heal and repair the tears, the lost stitches, and the frayed edges of the fabric of our human connectedness?” She related the challenge of personal relationships to our social and global structures, and to our relationship with the natural world.

**Saturday Afternoon, September 27, 2003
Indigenous Cultures**

THE AFTERNOON SESSION built on the morning by illustrating how dialogue works among some of our society’s most alienated people: Native Americans, youth, and the incarcerated. Much of the discussion related to peace-making circles, a democratic model of dialogue that is widely used in indigenous cultures to resolve differences in a communal way. All of the presenters in the afternoon spoke from extensive experience with the circle process.

Harold Gatensby introduced himself as a member of the Raven Clan of the Inland Tlingit Nation from the Yukon Territory of North America and began by confessing that while it was “scary” for him to address such a large crowd, he felt a need to do this “to try to stop the suffering of our people.” He spoke freely of his ancestors, his deep connection to nature, and the importance of spirituality in guiding one’s behavior on Earth.

Saroeum Phoung’s work with Roca, Inc., in Chelsea, Massachusetts, has been informed by his past experi-



Harold Gatensby of the Inland Tlingit Nation from the Yukon Territory of North America offered a moving conclusion to the one-and-a-half day conference.



Tu Weiming represented the Harvard-Yenching Institute, cosponsor of the Center’s 10th Anniversary conference.

ence as a Cambodian monk and a former gang leader. He spoke eloquently of how the circle process, as it is used at Roca, has helped to build community by building relationships. “This has changed my life completely,” he said.

Restorative justice planner Kay Pranis began by speaking of how she came to criminal justice work after becoming involved in community-building through years of participation on a school board. Pranis defined justice as “right relationship” and restorative justice as “restoring community to right relationships.” “Crime is never just an individual act,” Pranis said. “It happens in a web.”

Molly Baldwin shared her experience of working with young people and families at Roca, Inc., the organization she founded. She explained how, initially, the model she implemented was aggressive and confrontational. It was only after attending a conference organized by Carolyn Boyes-Watson on restorative justice and the circle process that she changed her approach to her work.

For an in-depth text summary and video excerpts of the 10th Anniversary, please go to the 2004 Events section of www.brc21.org.



WOMEN MAKING PEACE



This group of girl ex-combatants in Monrovia, Liberia, were interviewed by the author during her field work there in November 2003.

“I want to go to school.”

“I want to learn how to write my name.”

“I want to be a good person.”

THESE ARE THE WISHES of girl soldiers in Liberia. It is November 2003, and I am working for USAID on an assessment of women and girls affected by the 14-year civil war in Liberia. I interview thirty girls who were released by their commanders after suffering several years of frontline fighting, sexual slavery, and servitude. I ask them what they want when peace comes to Liberia: “Do you want to go to school or have a job? Are you going to leave the capital and go back to your village? How old is your baby?” Meaningless questions in the face of such dark experience. The girls had only been out of the bush for three weeks and looked like lively teenagers, except that some of them had scars on their faces, or were carry-

ing babies on their hips, or suddenly became wild with emotion without knowing why. These are the girls we are relying on to make peace.

On another day, we go to visit the “peace-ladies,” the women of Monrovia who sit in Roberts Airfield every day in white t-shirts that say *“Peace, Yes! War, No! Peace, Yes! Corruption, No!”* They are organizing women in the marketplace for a peace rally.

We enter the maze of tables selling dried fish, used clothes, hot peppers, and junk. In the heart of the market, a peace-lady starts yelling at the top of her voice to all the other ladies, “Stop and come over here! I want to tell you something! We are going to march for peace on Thursday! You wear white and you come out to tell them that the war has got to stop! The rape has got to stop! Remember wear your white on Thursday!” The women in the market seem convinced. They will march on Thursday even if they don’t have a white T-shirt.

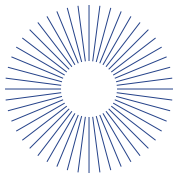
How do women engage in peace-building? What is different about women’s understanding and experience of conflict and peace? In most societies, peaceful or otherwise, women have unequal access to political, economic, and social resources. In most post-conflict societies, women constitute the majority of the

population, are the heads of household, and form the foundation of restarting the economy. Women must confront the daily issues of survival — particularly during the postwar period when the state lacks the means to meet these critical needs. They do so by collaborating, sharing, and organizing: women in Rwanda participated in the distribution of food aid, in El Salvador they founded organizations to press for the release of political prisoners, in Bosnia and Herzegovina they managed daycare facilities and voluntary health services. Women’s peace efforts tend to focus on healing and reconciliation of human relationships. They hope that not only will the political and economic institutions be rebuilt, but that the spirit will rise again.

In Sierra Leone I talked with a woman who worked in a disarmament camp. She said, “We women see what the men don’t see. We see the small soldiers standing in line at the UN camp, waiting to give up their guns just so they can eat something. But they wait and wait for hours in the hot sun. They get tired, hungry, and thirsty, and they go back to the bush with their guns, dejected. But we see with a mother’s eyes. These are children. Little boys who are hungry. Not killers, not soldiers. So we decided as mothers, to feed the children and say, ‘You are ours. You are still our boy, our girl. Come to us. We love you.’ We gave them bags of peanuts and fresh doughnuts which we made, and you know what? They didn’t leave. They are children. They will come back to us.” These are the women we are relying on to make peace.

— *Sabana Dharmapuri*
Women’s Legal Rights Advisor/Gender Specialist, USAID Investing in Women in Development Fellows Program, International Institute for Education, funded by the United State Agency for International Development





EDITOR'S NOTE

MOST OF US HAVE BEEN RAISED to think of competition as the fountain of innovation. In this issue, we highlight the work and ideas of several people whose innovative thinking springs from a desire for connection, a respect for community, and a recognition of common purpose. At the Center's 10th Anniversary conference last fall, Jan Surrey of the Stone Center suggested creative ways to work through disconnection in personal relationships and society. At the Rachel Carson Lecture for Environmental Ethics, Janine Benyus urged us to "learn from the experts," the organisms whose life-enhancing adaptations ensure sustainability. In our Guest Interview with Sayra Pinto, we learn how relationship building has opened new possibilities and led to real results for young people. And Eric Olick's commentary suggests that by simply slowing down the race to achieve, we might teach children something about real life.

In a world wracked by violence and fear, the notion of starting with our individual lives to build cultures of peace might be a way out. As Daisaku Ikeda reminds us in his annual peace proposal, a deep awareness of others is the source of all possibility, the true source of transformative change. This idea is echoed by Sahana Dharmapuri who describes how women make peace by making deeply personal connections. Competition has its place, to be sure. But as the voices represented in this twenty-second issue of the BRC Newsletter demonstrate, "outside-the-box" thinking need not separate us into winners and losers. Like complex ecosystems, our challenge is coming up with bright ideas that, in the words of Janine Benyus, "create conditions conducive to life."

— *Patti M. Marxsen*
Publications Manger

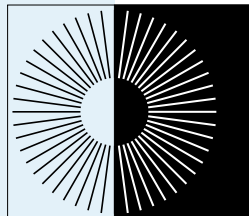
Mission Statement

The Boston Research Center for the 21st Century (BRC) is an international peace institute that envisions a worldwide network of global citizens developing cultures of peace through dialogue and understanding.

The Center's mission is to cultivate an inclusive sense of community, locally and globally.

Its current programs focus on women's leadership for peace, global citizenship education, and the philosophy and practice of community building. We sponsor public forums, educational seminars, and dialogue circles that are collaborative, diverse, and inter-generational. BRC also produces multi-author books that have been used in over 200 college and university courses.

The Center was founded in 1993 by Daisaku Ikeda, a peace activist and President of Soka Gakkai International (SGI), a Buddhist association with members in 187 countries.



How to Reach Us

We welcome your advice, ideas, and comments, as well as requests for complimentary examination copies of our books. Individual staff members can be reached by calling 617-491-1090 or via fax at 617-491-1169. Email addresses are listed below:

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Photo Credits: BRC Staff, Sahana Dharmapuri, Marilyn Humphries

Printing Services: Atlantic Printing, Needham, www.atlanticprinting.com

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