

Public Conversations Project

UPDATE SPRING 2008

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Faculty members participate in a dialogue training at Randolph College.

CAMPUS FACES CHALLENGES OF GOING COED

Randolph College wins grant to continue dialogues

Men on campus. It was just one of the many changes brought about by Randolph-Macon Woman's College's transition in 2007 to a coeducational institution, Randolph College. The transformation at the 116-year-old school created concerns and questions in every corner of the campus, from the classroom to alumnae affairs to the financial office. Sides formed, divides deepened, and tension colored the once-peaceful campus in Lynchburg, Virginia.

The Acting President and some faculty members suggested addressing the conflict by creating opportunities for small group discussions. The Public Conversations Project was called upon to help create a safe environment in which members of the faculty, staff, and trustees could embark on meaningful conversations about the college.

Over the next 14 months, PCP Senior Associate Corky Becker and Program Director Dave Joseph provided six different dialogue and training sessions at the college for community members to share their hopes, expectations, and frustrations related to such issues as the College's decision to go coed, the impact on the College's finances, and community morale. Nearly 200 people participated in the dialogues.

"The sessions were not focused on solving problems," says Joseph, "but rather on building trust. [There's] greater appreciation on campus of the fact that when trust is low, it's hard to commit to actions and to get work done."

"This was an opportunity to be heard and to be respected as an individual," says Buildings and Grounds staff member James Rucker, who was one of nineteen staff, faculty, and administrators trained to facilitate dialogue. "There were all different names and titles at the table, but everyone was equal and neutral. I was relieved that I was able to just be myself and hear others talk about themselves. It was really different than it was before. The process has given me the power to be heard and be seen. It's unreal."

For some, the experience had an effect on their teaching as well. "This method of getting to the root of the problem has changed the way I interact with students in my classroom and has made me a more effective teacher," says Professor Rebecka Brasso.

After positive responses to the first three dialogue sessions, the College received a grant from the Jessie Ball DuPont Fund for three more visits by PCP staff. PCP went on to train nineteen faculty and staff and fourteen students to conduct constructive conversations on campus.



▶ “Those who participated in the dialogue facilitator training, as well as those in the dialogues themselves, realized that they could use the process to reach out and support one another,” says Becker. “They could intentionally work to understand the experience of someone whose job or experience at the college was very different, and in doing so, they could develop a more inclusive community.”

One of the fourteen students trained in facilitation, first-year Elizabeth Zehl, calls the dialogue she participated in “unexpectedly positive and beneficial.”

“I was very surprised at the sense of intimacy in the [dialogue] group. There was a certain trust and understanding that was singular to that conversation, even while there was a lot of diversity in our viewpoints.”

Zehl is hoping that PCP’s approach will be used to start a series of dialogues on campus about topics ranging from gender equality to the upcoming election: “I see great potential for applying PCP rules

in an academic setting that gives participants the tools to express their own opinions and be able to actively listen to others. PCP’s process allows people the space to be intellectually curious and to engage with others on important issues in a way that ultimately benefits their own understanding of what they believe.”

Additional dialogues are scheduled for late April and May and the planning committee for these conversations is discussing next steps. So far, participants have indicated that they want to stay connected with, and better understand, people with whom they might strongly disagree.

“We’ve seen an amazing depth of commitment to the College on the part of everyone on campus,” Joseph says. “It’s our hope that these conversations can help them regain a sense of community.” ■

Writer Maureen Robb and Randolph College granted permission to adapt this story for the Public Conversations Project newsletter.



From the Board Chair

“THE TIDE MAY BE TURNING.”

As the Public Conversation Project’s 20th birthday approaches, I am reminded of the pioneering nature of our beginnings. My colleagues and I were early responders to the rising tide of polarizing behavior that has polluted the airwaves, campaigns, public

meetings, and general tone of U.S. civic and political life between 1989 and the present.

During the 1990s, growing concern about the degeneration of discourse and behavior in the public square was reflected in a plethora of books with titles such as *Culture Wars* (1991), *Democracy on Trial* (1996), and *A House Divided: Six Belief Systems Struggling for America’s Soul* (1997). Robert Putnam’s 1995 essay “Bowling Alone: America’s Declining Social Capital,” which shares a title with his 2000 book, introduced the shorthand of “social capital” to refer to the many ties that hold together our civil society and surround and ground our democratic institutions—ties his research showed were weakening amidst multiple economic, technological, and social shifts.

By the time the 2004 electoral cycle rolled around, the widespread use of the phrase “Red/Blue Divide” reflected the growing sense that our society had become alarmingly bifurcated.

As I write, it appears as though the tide may be turning. So far this year, voters have favored candidates who shun the politics of polarization. The remaining presidential candidates share track records that include bipartisan outreach, values, and abilities. This could enable whoever becomes our next president to draw together

a critical mass of citizens to grapple more effectively with the critical challenges crowding our collective doorstep.

My optimism is real, but cautious and inquisitive. Are large segments of the American public really experiencing polarization fatigue? Can those elected next fall lead or inspire meaningful bridge-building acts at all levels of civil society? Will young and first-time voters sustain their interest in the public square and join forces with other, older citizens to repair our frayed civic infrastructure? Or, are we experiencing a countercultural blip before the tide of toxic rhetoric sweeps our ability to engage our differences constructively out to sea? We have been there before—as recently as the burst of community spirit that emerged, but soon dissipated, in the aftermath

“ARE LARGE SEGMENTS OF THE AMERICAN PUBLIC REALLY EXPERIENCING POLARIZATION FATIGUE?”

of September 11, 2001. We need to do better this time.

PCP has been “onto” polarization for almost twenty years. Now we are poised to join forces with a new wave of social capital builders and support efforts to expand the current signs of a turning tide into a steady current of civic and community revitalization.

With anticipation,

Laura Chasin

Laura Chasin

Let's Talk: Skills for Hard Conversations

The Public Conversations Project's new workshop, Let's Talk, explores how people can have difficult one-on-one conversations with others in their lives. Here, Senior Associate Corky Becker and Program Director Dave Joseph share what they hope people will learn from the training.

THIS IS PCP'S FIRST NEW WORKSHOP FOR THE GENERAL PUBLIC IN 3 YEARS. WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO CREATE LET'S TALK?

Corky: We created the first versions of the workshop in response to explicit requests from clients, and there was an ongoing idea at PCP to make our material available for people to use in their everyday lives.

Dave: Historically, our work has focused on people in relatively high conflict situations involving values, identities, and worldviews, but feedback tells us that people are adapting what they've learned and finding it useful in conversations with partners, family members, close friends, and colleagues. So this workshop focuses explicitly on that.

HOW IS IT SIMILAR TO PCP'S OTHER WORKSHOPS? HOW IS IT DIFFERENT?

Corky: It's different in its focus on individuals. Our other workshops focus on the various challenges of facilitating a group. This addresses the challenge of being a participant in the conversation, and how to shape and influence how you and the other person talk to each other.

Dave: The structure is very similar to other workshops: It's highly experiential and stresses the value of reflection and learning from one's own experience. And, like the rest of our work, the focus is on being able to step back, view things from multiple perspectives, avoid assumptions, and communicate more effectively.

Corky: People ask us, "What if I get mad?" So we also have included an intro to the neurophysiology of arousal which addresses how people can have the calm that is needed to have a really constructive conversation in the face of hot button issues or very alive, old conversations that have felt demoralizing, demonizing, dehumanizing. . .

CAN YOU DESCRIBE SOME LIFE SITUATIONS FOR WHICH THIS TRAINING WOULD BE APPLICABLE?



Corky: The situations are endless—mothers and daughters, mothers and sons, grown siblings, girlfriends, boyfriends, parents. People often face a situation with a person they care about tremendously but have had a difficult history with. This workshop is a basis for turning the corner in a relationship and imagining a new way of having a conversation.

Dave: And work situations. You might have to have conversations as a supervisor or manager that you anticipate will be difficult, awkward, or challenging. People who take the workshop get a chance to practice the skills we talk about in relation to their particular scenario.

DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS ARE AN UNFORTUNATE REALITY FOR MOST PEOPLE. WHAT ARE THE MOST COMMON ELEMENTS PRESENT IN HARD CONVERSATIONS?

Dave: People don't often know how to talk about important things in a way that won't result in someone feeling hurt, attacked, or upset.

Corky: Hopelessness. It is very hard to figure out how to have a conversation about things about which people feel very strongly and differently, especially when one or both people feel threatened by those differences. Certain skills are needed so you can listen without giving in, giving up, giving over, or losing. And there's a distinction between really trying to understand a different perspective and giving up your own point of view or perspective.

WHAT DO YOU HOPE THAT PEOPLE WALK AWAY WITH AFTER TAKING LET'S TALK?

Dave: A renewed sense of hope, courage, and confidence as well as a willingness to consider how what they have learned will make it possible for them to have some of these hard conversations.

"THIS WORKSHOP IS A BASIS FOR TURNING THE CORNER IN A RELATIONSHIP."

CORKY BECKER

Corky: That people's energy, which otherwise gets wrapped up in protecting and defending themselves against the threat of these very tough conversations, can be freed up for living, learning, and doing.

Dave: An awareness that one's commitment to listening deeply, speaking thoughtfully, and understanding the other person's intentions can result in strengthening the relationship.

AT THE PUBLIC CONVERSATIONS PROJECT, WE OFTEN TALK ABOUT WHAT IS AT "THE HEART OF THE MATTER." WHAT, TO YOU, IS AT THE HEART OF THIS WORKSHOP?

Corky: I've learned so much from being involved with PCP and found it so helpful to so many situations in my own life. I have always wanted to find some way to pass along some of the awareness and skills so that other people can benefit from what we have learned.

Dave: For me, it attempts to translate a lot of what we do into everyday life to help equip people with the kinds of skills that will allow them to open doors they might not have seen before.

The next Let's Talk workshop will be held September 26 in the Boston area. Space is limited—sign up today by calling 888.727.8326 X13. ■



From the President

CAN YOU RESIST READING A LIST?

I can't. "Top 10 Money Saving Tips for 2008." "Five Things You Can Do to Take Control of Your Health." And, of course, "10 Ways to Lose Weight (and Keep It Off)." A compulsive

list-maker myself, I like the simplicity and clarity they promise.

In that spirit, I have created a list for the many people who ask what they can do to support the Public Conversations Project. If you, and other readers of this newsletter adopt at least some of the suggestions on this list, you will not only strengthen the Public Conversations Project, you will also help create a more civil civic climate.

10 WAYS YOU CAN HELP PCP

1. FAMILY MATTERS. Power of Dialogue trainee Annie Bentz and her family join forces to make a significant charitable donation every year.

This year, they gave the Public Conversations Project a generous gift to provide training scholarships to individuals from and working in underserved and underfunded communities.

"IF YOU KNOW ABOUT A CONFLICT IN YOUR TOWN, WORKPLACE, CHURCH, OR SCHOOL, BE PROACTIVE."

2. A DONATION IN LIEU OF... Long-time friend of PCP Barbara Buell and her law firm, Bloom & Buell, made a donation in their clients' honor in lieu of sending holiday cards. Consider celebrating a birthday, an anniversary, or another important occasion by asking friends and family to make a donation to the Public Conversations Project in your honor.

3. JOIN THE PCP EXCHANGE. Choose one of many creative ways to help the Public Conversations Project and then take advantage of the opportunities offered to *exCHANGE* members. For more information, see our Web site: www.publicconversations.org.

4. MAKE A "STRETCH" GIFT BY SPREADING PAYMENTS OVER TIME. If you charge \$50/\$100/\$1,000 to your credit card each month on behalf of the Public Conversations Project you will grow your yearly gift amount.

5. INCLUDE THE PUBLIC CONVERSATIONS PROJECT IN YOUR ESTATE PLAN. While we hope that this gift won't become available for many years, it allows you to leave a legacy and ensures that the work you value continues. Last spring, we received a generous bequest from an anonymous donor. Her gift is providing the basis of an endowment and is also funding various projects, including research and writing, that might not happen otherwise.

6. PLEDGES COUNT! MAKE A MULTI-YEAR PLEDGE TO THE PUBLIC CONVERSATIONS PROJECT. An up-front commitment for three to five years allows us to make commitments to long-term and future projects.

7. SPREAD THE WORD! If you know about a conflict in your part of the world—town, workplace, church, or school—that could benefit from a PCP-facilitated dialogue, be proactive. Encourage people to consider calling PCP. Share our materials. For more information contact Alison Streit Baron, Program Manager, abaron@publicconversations.org.

8. NEVER UNDERESTIMATE THE POWER OF A GOOD IDEA! Do you have a fundraising idea for the Public Conversations Project? Let us know! Have you seen another organization do something very effective? Tell us about it. Susan Dowds, an experienced fundraising professional, would be delighted to discuss your suggestions. Contact her at sdowds@publicconversations.org.

9. ...JUST AS GOOD AS CASH! While we cannot accept offers of donated facilitation services, certain in-kind donations would help tremendously.

Two top budget-busters are travel and printing expenses.

Consider donating some

of your airline miles to the Public Conversations

Project to help us get our staff to the next "hot spot." If you

have access to low-cost (and high-quality) printing, let Communications Manager Susan Countryman know about your contact.

"...HELP US GET OUR STAFF TO THE NEXT 'HOT SPOT.'"

10. VISIBILITY! People fund organizations they've heard of. Help the Public Conversations Project increase its visibility. If you have a relationship with a member of the media, play matchmaker! We have knowledgeable and skilled staff members available for interviews about a number of issues, including conflicts within religious organizations, abortion, the so-called "red/blue" divide, community-wide conflict, dialogue between Muslims and Jews, and more. To discuss creating media opportunities for the Public Conversations Project, please contact Communications Manager Susan Countryman at scountryman@publicconversations.org.

Thanks for keeping us a top priority on your list,

Cherry Muse

From UN to Iraq, Zachary Metz finds PCP practices invaluable



Zachary Metz has taught student peacemakers in Lebanon. He has worked with Iraqi lawyers trying to create a process to handle property disputes. He has trained law enforcement, government, and NGO leaders from Northern Ireland to help build relationships. In all of these cases, he has brought PCP with him. “PCP’s dialogic model is the best I’ve seen, ever,” he says.

Metz is the Director of the Peace Building practice at Consensus,

an innovative negotiation, conflict resolution, and peace-building consulting firm (www.consensusgroup.com), and was formerly the Director of Education & Training for Columbia University’s Center for International Conflict Resolution (CICR). He teaches The Applied Workshop in International Conflict Resolution at Columbia’s School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA). He also has consulted to United Nations agencies and political and civil society leaders in more than a dozen countries.

Metz encountered PCP at the 2001 conference “Best Practices in Dialogue,” where PCP Vice President Bob Stains was a panelist. He then used PCP’s approach to facilitate a dialogue about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on the campus of Columbia University. That experience was challenging, so in 2003 he took PCP’s Power of Dialogue workshop.

Since then, he’s used dialogue to help people communicate and “say what’s real,” even in areas experiencing deep, violent conflict. Dialogue, he says, “moves people forward, gets their needs met, and gets them through the deep stuff that otherwise gets in the way of collaboration or that could enrich collaboration if it were brought forward.”

People may not necessarily be on “side A” or “side B,” he says, but the context in which they live and work is polarizing. He cites a training he did for police officers, governmental officials, and NGO leaders from

Northern Ireland, to try to build relationships between law enforcement and civil society. Dialogue was a key part of that training: “Having the safety of a dialogic structure—for example, the communication agreements—means they can have conversations they cannot normally have . . . And civility, especially in a violent context, can be very meaningful.”

Metz often offers people the opportunity to experience dialogue within more general trainings on communication, cooperation, or conflict transformation, such as at a week-long peace-building institute for college-age youth in the Middle East. He introduces the communication skills and interactive exercises as a way to prepare participants for dialogue.

The skills are useful, he says, but it’s the dialogue that “really stays with people.”

“PCP’S DIALOGUE MODEL IS THE BEST I’VE SEEN, EVER.”

Does he see the effects of dialogue in the various areas of the world where he’s worked? Yes and no.

“Dialogue in and of itself doesn’t create results,” he says. “It’s not the destination, it’s the path.” He sees dialogue as less of a methodology than a phenomenon. Citing sociologist Émile Durkheim’s notion of “collective effervescence,” Metz notes that “people come together and something happens that is greater than the sum of its parts.” ■

ZACHARY METZ USES DIALOGUE TO HELP PEOPLE “SAY WHAT’S REAL.”

“HAVING THE SAFETY OF A DIALOGIC STRUCTURE . . . MEANS PEOPLE CAN HAVE CONVERSATIONS THEY CANNOT NORMALLY HAVE.”

IBM REPORT: PCP A “MODEL FOR FACILITATING DIALOGUE”

The Public Conversations Project was recently cited as a “model for facilitating dialogue about policy issues” by the IBM Center for the Business of Government. In the Center’s recently released report “A Manager’s Guide to Resolving Conflict in Collaborative Networks,” the Public Conversations Project is one of three organizations highlighted for successfully engaging citizens in public policy decisions.

The report makes many recommendations in line with PCP’s practices, such as, “To become an effective group problem solver . . . members should invest in preparation, bring an open mind to network meetings, and brainstorm options collaboratively with other network members.”

Also in the report, authors Rosemary O’Leary and Lisa Blomgren Bingham share hopes that their public policy research “will serve to spark new and creative ways to solve collaboratively our most pressing public policy problems.” O’Leary is Distinguished Professor of Public Administration at Syracuse University and Bingham is Keller-Runden Professor of Public Service at Indiana University—Bloomington. ■

Dick Chasin



DICK CHASIN SEES DEALING WITH CONFLICT AS A COMMON CONSISTENT THREAD THROUGH HIS NEARLY FIFTY-YEAR CAREER.

In the early 1960s, most mental health practitioners discredited family therapy. However, during his adult psychiatry training (1961-64), Chasin became convinced that family meetings were powerful tools for addressing family conflict. In 1964, he participated in a seminal workshop in San Francisco at which “the sixty people there comprised most of the family therapists in the world at the time.”

It was then that he set his first major professional goal: to help establish family therapy as a mainstream modality in the mental health professions. For the next thirty years, Chasin studied, practiced, and taught family therapy wherever he could. By the 1990s, family therapy had become a household term and there were tens of thousands of family therapists throughout the world. In 1993, Chasin's efforts were recognized; he was elected president of the American Family Therapy Academy.

His second major goal: to contribute to slowing or stopping the nuclear arms race. This objective had its roots in his service as a psychiatrist in the US Air Force (1964-1966). Posted at a key base in the Strategic Air Command (SAC), he was given the responsibility of determining whether people who handled nuclear weapons were mentally stable. As part of his first-day orientation, he visited a bunker where polite, clean-cut young men were drinking Cokes while performing grease and lube jobs on one of the dozens of hydrogen bombs on the air base. Later he met pilots who called the B-52s “birds” and the four atomic bombs carried by each bird “animals.” One colonel casually described himself as “a well-educated, cultured, mass murderer.” Chasin believes this experience of being daily “face to face with the banality of evil” influenced his later interest in reducing the conflicts that fueled the arms race.

In the 1980s, as the decades-old Cold War dragged on, he began crafting and leading workshops on stereotyping at International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW) Congresses. The workshops aimed at surfacing the assumptions and perceptions that fostered and sustained the dangerous nuclear competition between the Soviet Union and Western powers. Even among those united in opposition to nuclear war there was a need for a space where perceptions and

stereotypes could be explored and learned from. PCP associate Maggie Herzig co-led many of these workshops. The Nobel Prize winning IPPNW helped create momentum for policy changes leading up to the historic 1986 Reykjavik Summit.

Chasin's next goal was to support the kind of negotiation training fostered by Harvard Law School's Negotiation Project, which emphasizes “principled negotiation” as opposed to hard bargaining. Led by Frank Sander and Roger Fisher, who with Bill Ury co-authored *Getting to Yes* (1981), the Project has been one of the most popular and enduring courses held at the Law School. In 1984 Chasin and colleague Rick Lee developed a psychological component for its curriculum. The authors of *Difficult Conversations* (1999), Douglas Stone, Bruce Patton, and Sheila Heen, had been teaching assistants and consultants to the Project. Three PCP associates have served on its faculty. Though Chasin has had an academic appointment for 40 years at Harvard Medical School, he considers his role in this Law School course to be his single most important academic contribution.

Chasin's final career goal has been to help develop and promote the Public Conversations Project style of dialogue. He brought the lessons he learned from creating space for dialogue in the cauldron of family therapy sessions, to bridging communication gaps and unpacking stereotypes during the arms race, to the ethical and creative ways of approaching difference that he witnessed in Roger Fisher's work to developing the practices of PCP.

“PCP's approach is simple and powerful. It seems like a distillate of everything I have learned,” he concludes. “The power of dialogue and collaboration is just what we need in this time of devastating political conflicts and the escalating effects of climate change.” ■

FAITH QUILT NEEDS RIDE TO RAMALLAH



When Jean Zaru saw the exhibition of Boston's Faith Quilts Project (FQP) in the spring of 2006, she wished she could have a faith quilt for a bare stone wall in her battle-weary place of worship, The Friends Meeting House in Ramallah, Palestine. Emily Ronald, one of the FQP faith quilters, suggested that a group of Americans

might be able to create a faith quilt as a gift.

Ronald then teamed up with PCP's Maggie Herzig, who served as the dialogue consultant for the Faith Quilts Project, to design a dialogue and a “quilt envisioning” event to launch the creative process. This event, co-sponsored by the Dialogue Forum and Harvard University's Pluralism Project, drew twenty-eight people, who contributed ideas for communicating care and compassion.

Ronald has now completed the last stitches on the beautiful quilt, but one last task remains to complete this act of care and creativity—to deliver it. If you know of a reliable person traveling to Ramallah, please contact Emily Ronald at ekronald@gmail.com. ■

Celebrating new energy, new talent

DIRECTORS

Laura Chasin, Founder and Chair of the Board, recently welcomed two new members to the Board of Directors.



DOUG STONE: Doug Stone is a Managing Partner at Triad Consulting Group and a Lecturer on Law at Harvard Law School, where he teaches negotiation. Through Triad, he consults to a wide range of organizations, including Fidelity, Honda, HP, IBM, Merck, Microsoft, Shell, the Nature Conservancy, and the Boston Area Rape Crisis Center. Stone has also taught and mediated around the world, with mediators and journalists in South Africa; Greek and Turkish political and community leaders in Cyprus; doctors and executives at the World Health Organization and diplomats at the former Organization of African Unity in Ethiopia.

“PCP IS MAKING A
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DOUG STONE

Stone is co-author, with Bruce Patton and Sheila Heen, of *Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most* (Penguin, 2000), a New York Times Business Bestseller. From 1988 to 1998, Stone was an Associate and then Associate Director of the Harvard Negotiation Project. He is a fan of the “high-quality dialogue and communication work” PCP has done, particularly the “rigorous thinking about what works and what doesn’t work.” He believes PCP is “making a contribution to big issues the world is facing, cultural, political, environmental divides,” in the U.S. and internationally.



BARBARA BRAVER: Barbara Braver has a long career in writing, editing, and communications, including service as Director of Communication for the Episcopal (Anglican) Diocese of Massachusetts, and, later, as Assistant for Communication to Frank Griswold, the Presiding Bishop of

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BARBARA BRAVER

the national Episcopal Church. When Griswold’s term ended in November 2006, she edited a “festschrift” in his honor, *I Have Called You Friends: Reflections on Reconciliation in Honor of Frank T. Griswold*. Now, Braver is enjoying a new chapter in her life, which includes her grown children, a grandchild, activities in her community, leading retreats, and various writing projects. She continues to be involved in Episcopal Church activities internationally. She is working on a book with Bishop Griswold, with whom she will travel to Cuba this year for peacebuilding. Says Braver of joining PCP’s board: “It is a privilege to be involved with an organization that is such a potent force for good. This is especially so during this marvelously yeasty time for PCP, as the staff and board look at possible futures and work toward determining how resources can best be increased and deployed in the service of its mission.”

STAFF

A long-time consultant steps into a staff position and is named associate.

MARY JACKSTEIT, JD, MS: Mary Jacksteit has worked in conflict resolution for twenty years, most recently directing the Collaboration DC project at Search for Common Ground. She also directed the Network for Life and Choice at Search for Common Ground and was appointed by President Clinton and served for seven years on the

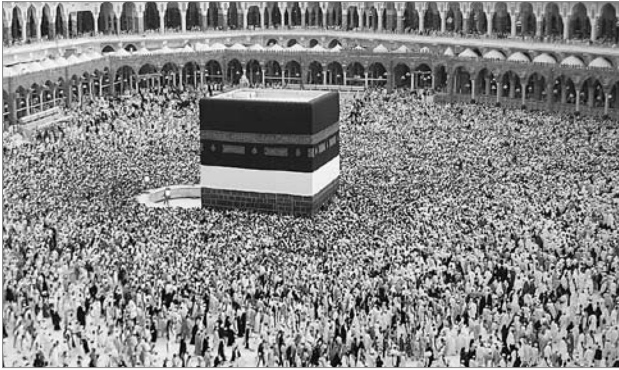


Federal Service Impasses Panel, which mediates labor management negotiation impasses in the federal government. Since the late 90s, Jacksteit has been a PCP consultant, and, since 2003, facilitator of a multi-year dialogue on the use of animals in medical research. Hired as Project Manager in the fall, Jacksteit was recently named an associate. She is working with the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy on a major initiative to reduce the rate of unplanned pregnancy among people in their 20’s.

“I could not be happier with the turn of events that brings me to a new project and closer connection with PCP,” says Jacksteit. “I have learned so much from PCP’s grounding in psychology and psychotherapy, and from the rigor and intention in its processes. And this is an exciting time at PCP, as the organization is growing and moving in new directions.”

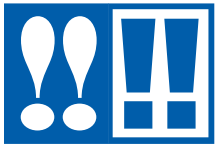
Jacksteit lives with her husband of thirty years in Takoma Park, Maryland, has two grown children, and loves the woods, singing in her church choir, and reading poetry. ■

MAKING HAJJ: PCP ENHANCES UNDERSTANDING OF MUSLIM RITUAL



The Public Conversations Project regularly helps communities to address interfaith and intrafaith conflicts, and for that reason, has a vested interest in deeply understanding the world's religions. Staff member Zaynab Blinker recently gave a presentation on her experience in performing the Hajj, a journey of faith for Muslims. In December, Blinker made the twenty-one-day pilgrimage to Amman, Jordan, and Medina and Mecca, Saudi Arabia, with a group of fifty other pilgrims from the Islamic Society of Boston.

Visiting Islam's holiest sites was a once in a lifetime journey for Blinker, who described the multiple rituals as physically and mentally challenging. More than two million Muslims make Hajj each year, despite grueling heat and sun, and massive crowds. "It was very special," says Blinker. "I was in the moment—I felt very connected with the experience and with everyone I met." ■



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To sign up for eNews or provide feedback, please email scountryman@publicconversations.org

UPCOMING WORKSHOPS

For nearly fifteen years, clinicians, supervisors, and managers have been successfully using the Public Conversations Project's ideas and techniques to help clients and staff shift conflicted relationships. Build your skills by taking one of our workshops.

The Power of Dialogue: Constructive Conversations on Divisive Issues

May 16-18, Boston area, MA
June 16-18, Los Angeles, CA
June 27-29, Vancouver, B.C.
November 12-14, Boston area, MA

Let's Talk: Skills for Hard Conversations

September 26, Boston area, MA

Inquiry as Intervention: Crafting Questions with Purpose & Intent

October 20, Boston area, MA

To register or for more information, please email training@publicconversations.org or call 888.727.8326 X13.

*PCP workshops have limited enrollments, sliding scale fees, and provide CE credits through NASW, APA, NBCC, and MAMFT. Workshop costs range from \$125 to \$250 per day, depending on location.