

Blessed *are the* Peacemakers

Training graduates to cool off global hot spots isn't easy, but the IPJ and recipients of USD's Master's in Peace Studies are up to the task

by *Barbara Davenport*

Stand at one of the doors to the Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice. Look up. Above the lintel, a dove carved in stone carries an olive branch. If you stand at the other door and look up, you'll see Astraea's scale, ancient symbol of justice. These carvings testify to the conviction shared by Joan Kroc and the

illustrations by Barbara Ferguson

institute itself that peace and justice are deeply linked, and that one is impossible without the other. Every speaker and conference and program at the institute, every peace initiative its staff and graduates make, from Uganda to Bosnia to Southeast San Diego, is built from this fundamental knowledge: fairness, inclusiveness and respect are the basis of peace. Five years into its mission, the institute teaches this conviction both on-campus and on the ground in some of the world's most troubled places.

Since it opened its ornately carved doors in December 2001, the IPJ has become a respected instrument of peacemaking in the world. Conversations with staff, graduates, faculty, current students and guest scholars reveal how the institute connects with the campus and how it works at building peace in hot spots around the world.



The IPJ's simultaneous engagement with USD's academic mission and with its global mission is embodied in its campus presence. The curving entrance plaza is planted with daylilies and roses and graced with a flowing fountain. The two wings of the institute reach out to the rest of the university grounds. On the building's west side, the Garden of the Sea meditation garden and reflecting pool look out to San Diego, the Pacific Ocean and the world.

The structure's dramatic rotunda, along with its auditorium, conference rooms, production studios and negotiation center are all designed to serve national and international constituencies. The second floor brings the international work home to the campus; that's where the departments of history and political science have their faculty offices, as well as eight classrooms. Kathryn Statler, associate professor of history and coordinator for the undergraduate minor in peace and justice, is delighted with this arrangement. She says that students who come for classes or to meet with professors become aware of events organically. And they've so come to see the building as theirs that when security is increased for an international newsmaker or a former U.S. president, they've been known to grumble about the intrusion in their space.

As part of Peace and Justice 101, a basic course for the 18-unit minor in peace and justice, Statler requires her students to attend three IPJ events. Students come to the minor with questions about war and peacemaking, and want to learn the nuts and bolts of how societies go about rebuilding after conflict. "They get their eyes opened," she says. Students come away with a deeper understanding once they've had up-close contact with generals and legislators, heads of state and Nobel laureates, people who've been in the thick of peacemaking efforts.

This fall, Shirin Ebadi, an Iranian lawyer and peace activist who was awarded the Nobel prize in 2003, came to the campus as part of the IPJ's Distinguished Lecture Series; 1,800 people heard her speak in the Jenny Craig Pavilion. But Statler and 30 USD undergraduate students had a private meeting with Ebadi, including a free-flowing question-and-answer session in the IPJ.

The master's program in Peace and Justice Studies, an intensive interdisciplinary program emphasizing ethics, international affairs and conflict resolution, admits 12 students a year. Its graduates work for non-governmental organizations (NGOs), in university settings, in multinational corporations and elsewhere. In San Diego, one 2003 master's graduate used what he learned to build Reality Changers, a program to support first-generation college students.

The institute and the university's academic programs will become linked even more closely soon, once the first dean of the new School of Peace Studies arrives on campus. His or her task list includes expanding the current Peace and Justice minor into a full undergraduate major, and increasing the scope of the existing master's program. Like the IPJ, the school will serve both the campus and the wider world. Its charge is "to advance peace and justice through the development and dissemination of interdisciplinary scholarship and state of the art practice to serve the region, the nation and the worldwide human community." The IPJ will then become part of the School of Peace Studies, and its executive director, Joyce Neu, will report to the dean.

Endowing the IPJ was a direct reflection of Joan Kroc's longstanding commitment to peacemaking. Her vision of a peace institute at USD evolved through the '90s, in continuing conversations with then-President Alice Hayes. Both saw the institute as a concrete statement of Catholic social teachings that see peace as inseparable from justice.

Kroc wanted USD to engage with the whole world. In 1998, she gave the university \$25 million to build a facility that would include a conference center, classrooms, meeting facilities and a residence to house visiting scholars, as well as start an institute to do this work.

While the institute's home was being built, Kroc frequently came to campus. Dee Aker, interim director, remembers that Kroc would park near the construction site, and when the weather was good, she'd sit on a bench and watch the work. "She didn't come into our offices, and she

never told us how to build it," Aker remembers. "You could look out the window and see her sitting there, and just know how much she cared."

The mission statement published at the groundbreaking ceremonies describes Kroc's vision: " ... to establish harmony, safety and hope in a context of mutual respect and fairness in international, national and local communities. Through its peace studies, research and outreach programs, the Kroc Institute will creatively promote conflict resolution, non-violence and cross-cultural harmony in a setting where scholars, students, activists and political leaders can study, reflect and exchange in dialogue."

Kroc made her vision for the institute crystal clear at the building's dedication in December of 2001: "We must not only teach peace, but make peace."

That vision has guided the institute's work for its first five years. Joyce Neu of the Carter Center, which is committed to advancing human rights and alleviating suffering with health and peace programs, became director in 2000. Neu, Aker and other IPJ staff have traveled frequently to Nepal and Uganda to participate directly in peacemaking and planning. The U.S. Agency for International Development confirmed the institute's standing in the international community when it awarded a major grant for its in-country project, "Building Constituencies for Peace and Democratic Development in Nepal."

The IPJ also organizes conferences and programs that bring peacemakers to campus, most notably the Women PeaceMakers Program, which program officer Diane Kutlow calls "the heart of the IPJ." This initiative, unique to the institute, grew from Aker's work in Uganda, where, in the wake of a brutal civil war, she saw that "women were holding society together, literally rebuilding their country," yet they were excluded from the talks aimed at promoting peace.

The program recognizes that women on the front line of efforts to end violence and secure a just and peaceful solution seldom record their activities and insights, primarily because they have no time or, sometimes, insufficient formal education to record their stories. Each year, the institute

invites four women who've made significant contributions to peace, social justice and civil society in their own communities to come to campus for an eight-week stay, in which they can document, share and build upon their unique peacemaking stories.

Being invited to take part in the program, which covers transportation and the costs of the stay, is a significant honor and an internationally recognized validation of the importance of their work.

The most recent crop of PeaceMakers came from Kosovo, Serbia, Afghanistan and Sudan. Palwasha Kakar of Afghanistan created a secret home school for girls at a time when the Taliban forbade girls any schooling, and she smuggled texts in, using copies of the Koran. Shukrie Gashi, a lawyer, poet and mediator, drafted laws for mediation, property and housing, and gender equality for the newly liberated Kosovo.

The Women PeaceMakers have usually worked in hostile conditions, often in great personal danger. For each, her stay at the institute has been a welcome chance to step away from work, to slow down and reflect. They live in Casa de la Paz, a comfortable two-story guesthouse that opens onto the Garden of the Sea. Serbia's Svetlana Kijevcanin gestured around her room cluttered with papers, books and pamphlets, and grinned. "It's wonderful to be here, to have a chance to think about what I've done."

Each PeaceMaker is paired with a writer who's schooled in international affairs, and also works with a filmmaker to document her work. The films and the written documents, as well as the women's public presentations during their stay, make their work visible to a wider audience, confirming its importance to themselves and the community.

As USD's School of Peace and Justice grows and more students take courses and major in peace and justice studies, the institute's international and local peacemaking efforts will become even more visible and influential on a worldwide basis. In just five years, the vision of Joan B. Kroc has begun to manifest itself in far-reaching ways, to the enrichment of USD, the IPJ and the world. 🌍

