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Blessed Are the Peacemakers



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SUPPORT PLEDGED



***“Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God.”***

Matthew 5:9

A week has passed now since I returned home from my time in Santiago, Cuba. I am so grateful for the ways God worked in, through and between the people and experiences there. I gained new appreciation for my fellow facilitators: Ernesto Bazan, Mercy Gonzalez-Barnes, Ray Schellinger and Adalia Gutierrez-Lee. Together we worked from 8am to past 11pm most days. I wouldn't recommend this pace for the long-haul, but because of the concentrated nature of the training, we did what was needed. I feel like we honored the work of our mentors, Dan and Sharon Buttry since it was the first 10-day Training of Conflict Transformation Trainers without their presence. It was an historic and “passing of the baton” event, indeed. With the “passing of the baton” we also added our own touches and adaptations to work within the Cuban group's emerging experience. Let me share just one of these Spirit inspired moments.



On the sixth day of the training, we were exploring the concepts of Social Defense Theory and Jesus' Transforming Initiatives for Conflict Transformation and Reconciliation. To embody the idea of social defense, we used an emotionally charged experiential role play called the Village Game. I have experienced this game many times in the past and have felt conflicted after facilitating it.

*In the experiential education cycle that we use during the trainings, we start with the **experience** of the game, then move to **reflection** in order to harvest the wisdom of the group. Then we introduce the **theory**, which in this case was the stages of Social Defense theory. The fourth part in the experiential educational cycle that leads to another experience is application or **practice**.*

Without going into too much detail, the participants formed community groups where they were encouraged to dream about how they would create their ideal village, one that reflected God's Shalom or well-being for all. After the group creations were done and celebrated, their communities were threatened by a group of “friends” with questionable intentions. During the game, energy was high, creativity abounded and strong emotions surfaced. Reflection and debriefing happened once the action came to an appropriate teachable climax. As I was eliciting from the group each phase that occurred within the group's own experience, I recognized within me the



missing link to my unsettled feelings with this particular teaching tool. The theory piece ends with the group recognizing their movement from a defensive position to an offensive position. I sensed that, we as a group, were being invited to move further towards healing and transformation. As facilitators we could practice (part 4 of the cycle) not only social offense, but a transforming initiative for reconciliation.

While playing our “threatening” role, we the facilitators had damaged some of the group creations. I acknowledged the pain that we must have caused and asked if we could work to repair some of the damage. Ernesto, Ray and I received the marked and torn villages, got down on our hands and knees, gently straightened the wrinkles, put together the broken pieces and tried as best we could to tape the wounds shut. While recognizing that the scars of wounding could not be totally erased, we offered a gesture of repentance through recognition of harm caused, engaging in



active repair, we moved through forgiveness from opposite sides of a struggle toward reconciliation together.

This experience changed me. I see the work of trauma healing, conflict transformation and racial reconciliation differently now. I experienced a transformation, an invitation to both repentance and forgiveness and a new way of honoring others, myself and God’s dreams for us. I got a glimpse of Shalom and am inspired. I hope you are, too!

For the generous gifts that made these moments possible, I am grateful!

For the prayers and renewed purpose in peacemaking, I am grateful!

For your courage to learn, grow and change for grace and for good, I am grateful!

For your prayers as I head to Kenya for Healing Arts Trainings this week, I am depending and grateful!

Open to more,

My linda