

NETWORK FOCUS

ISSUE NUMBER 2 – 2019

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EDITORIAL

It seems like just yesterday that we were ringing in the New Year and looking forward to the many events of the first few months of 2019. Now, we are approaching the half-year mark and those events have been successfully celebrated! As the globe keeps spinning, and the seasons keep changing, we are reminded that time waits for no one; yet as time passes, we must step back from the hustle and bustle to reflect. Is moving at a rapid pace a result of actual urgency or is it simply the new normal?

In this issue of Network Focus we take a moment to reflect on the accomplishments and challenges of the past months. All of our lofC teams have received the report of the Sangam Consultation, which kick-started this year, and on page 4 you will find the reflections and insights of three lofC teams who presented their work at the Sangam.

As we prepare to launch a major partnership with the Fetzer Institute to build trust across the world's divides, we share an inside look at how the lofC team in the US are applying the concept of storytelling to transformative change. On page 6, Sionne Neely describes a creative event in January that grounded 'the importance of exploring the journey towards truth, racial healing, transformation and inclusive narrative change'. lofC has a rich heritage of using different creative media as a part of its outreach. This is a new and exciting approach to building trust, bridging divides and welcoming new people to the movement.

Outreach, in this fast-paced and technology-driven era, is a challenging aspect for our network, with its great diversity of age and experience. Our interview with Irna Yugaswatie, president of lofC Indonesia, (page 7) provides us

with valuable insights into how one team is growing their outreach and enabling the next generation to be the change.

The next season will bring our annual global assembly and all the activities that take place during the Caux Forum season in Switzerland. This is a great opportunity, not only for our existing fellowship members to connect, but to reach out to other changemakers and invite them to connect with our values and mission. Will you contribute to our outreach efforts by reaching out to someone new and inviting them to join our mission?

Imad Karam
Executive Director



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TRUSTBUILDING PROGRAMME

The Fetzer Institute of Kalamazoo, Michigan, is partnering with lofC International in a Trustbuilding Programme, which aims to train and empower people to build bridges across the world's divides. Two successful lofC programmes – the US's Community Trustbuilding Fellowship and India's Heart of Effective Leadership – will provide a general framework.

In January, 17 lofC trainers met in London to learn about the concept, enhance it with their practical knowhow and consider how to make the methodology replicable in diverse cultural contexts. They created a readiness checklist for lofC teams who want to make use of the programme. Participants in the London workshop have offered to help national teams implement it.

The programme will be piloted in three countries starting in 2019. Alex Wise, leader of the programme's Steering Committee, has just visited Kenya to work through the

criteria with the local lofC team and representatives of the African Regional Coordination Group. Later this year the Steering Group will invite another round of countries to participate in the programme.

[The Fetzer Institute](#) is a longtime friend of lofC. Their mission statement begins, 'We believe in the possibility of a loving world: a world where we understand we are all part of one human family and know our lives have purpose. In the world we seek, everyone is committed to courageous compassion and bold love – powerful forces for good in the face of fear, anger, division, and despair.'

Like lofC, Fetzer recognizes that personal spiritual journeys play a key role in addressing global issues. Both organizations have a history of successfully integrating personal transformation with work across multiple sectors. Our values and aims align. lofC is committed to 'building bridges across the world's divides' and Fetzer is working

towards 'transformed communities and societies in which all people can flourish'. By combining our efforts, we advance both groups' impact on the world.

Fetzer will provide funding support for the programme and infrastructure, and technical assistance in such matters as evaluation, communications, and fundraising. The details of the partnership agreement will be refined in the coming weeks.

The partnership will cover four years. People with appropriate skills will be hired with the Fetzer funds to manage the programme, and the funds will be administered and audited through the lofC International accounts.

These developments are not yet public, so please do not share this information outside lofC. A further announcement will be made when the details of the agreement are concluded.

<https://youtu.be/KCCWPafzYs>

The first **Cordoba Forum**, of which lofC International is a founding member, will take place in Cordoba, Spain.

15 to 17 May 2019

Ten lofC people will participate, including seven youth.

This year's **Global Assembly (GA)** will be held in Caux, Switzerland.

Friday, 12 July 4:30 pm to Sunday, 14 July 6:30 pm

IA Members are expected to send up to two delegates.

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AFRICA IS IN RENAISSANCE

In March and April Mounir Beltaifa, Thembi Silundika and Stephen Kimaru visited Lagos, Nigeria, to represent the International Council at the Pan African Consultation – Catalyzing an era of concrete action. Thembi writes:

An important task for me was to explore ways in which Initiatives of Change could assist with the promotion of good governance in Africa. So, before my trip, I spent hours reading, trying to catch up on the issues of the continent. Having lived in the diaspora for over 30 years, I feared that my views about Africa were outdated and obscured by mixed messages and misinformation. I was determined to bring myself up to speed. As the date of the event drew closer, I felt somewhat burdened with pessimism. I could not figure out how this modest conference would add value in solving the complex issues I had been reading about.

However, by day three of the Pan African Consultation, we had made significant progress and covered a lot of ground. I suddenly felt a fundamental shift within me, due to the amazing ideas, initiatives and reasoning shared by the African participants.

After the consultation, my inspiration continued to grow through the outreach events which I was privileged to be part of. A key one was a visit to Ogun State, to see the new farm of lofC Nigeria. I had a chance to interact with community members and to listen to elders as they spoke about their aspirations.

I was moved by the progress and amount of effort and hard work.

Another event was a gathering of Creators of Peace women leaders who shared stories about their work. We also discussed the importance of women's economic empowerment. In addition, I spent some time chatting with the young people and was inspired by their talent and hard work.

By the end of my visit I had no doubt that lofC Africa is fully equipped and poised to contribute positively towards Africa's development goals. I was also convinced that the priority of promoting good governance aligns well with the vision under the African Union Agenda 2063, entitled 'The Africa We Want'.

The 2019 lofC Pan African Conference has set the wheels in motion by committing to put into place the structures and actions necessary to move the key initiatives forward. The event strengthened my conviction that Africa is not broken. It is in a renaissance, and I look forward to being part of the effort to support Africa in promoting good governance and women's economic empowerment!



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SANGAM REPORTS

Early this year, from 30 January to 2 February 2019, the International Council hosted a consultation of 81 people who give leadership in lofC initiatives in their countries. At one session, representatives of three national lofC organizations told of their work. Their insights have also been posted on our website.

Lebanon

Ramez Salame: The lofC group in Lebanon started almost 40 years ago with the aim of helping change lives. The challenges we face are daunting, but what motivates us is the small voice inside us.

Without the help we have received through the years from colleagues outside Lebanon we would never have become what we are today. The programmes organized by lofC India and the Caux Peace and Leadership Programme are vitally important in introducing Lebanese youth to lofC and offering an adequate training. The international dimension of our fellowship is a precious element to be cherished.

Lebanon is small but around us we have countries at war. This brings deep mistrust. We have initiated carefully designed dialogue meetings to overcome the divides: the Christian–Muslim divide, the Palestinian–Lebanese divide and, more recently, the Sunni–Shia divide. These meetings have been inspiring, and several participants have been led to create their own movements for reconciliation and peace.

A striking example is Assaad, a former senior officer in a Christian militia during our 15-year civil war, and his wife Marie. Together with a distinguished Muslim woman, Marie has created a movement, Linaltaki, which means 'Let us meet'. Assaad has initiated a group called Fighters for Peace including

many former fighters from the civil war. One of them was an ex-commander in a Lebanese Muslim militia; he has astonishingly succeeded over the past two or three years in securing critical humanitarian arrangements in war-torn Syria, in Iraq and even in Yemen. The international media have reported these arrangements, but they do not know who made them possible.

Roweida Saleh: All our work is volunteer-based. Many of us have made lofC work our daily mission in our smaller communities, in the office, the classroom, at the university. Whenever time and resources allow, we go to schools and other educational institutions to give training. We focus on the process rather than the outcome; communicating the values of lofC without living them would empty the work of its heart and soul. We collaborate with other active bodies in the country. We have created an lofC house as a centre especially for young people. They arrange their own meetings and their own events, and we try to provide mentorship. Everyone is encouraged to take initiative, and many young people flock around the Lebanese team.

North East India

Niketu Iralu: There are 200 or more tribes in North East India, and many are waking up to new aspirations. The situation is totally chaotic and violence is widespread. But where people obey their inner voice, we see change, and this is

making an impact on the region. Violence has started to be rejected in North East India.

My wife and I have named our home Kerünyü Ki. In our language it means a house for listening. Tribal and village meetings take place there. We offer people the chance to listen, which is the beginning of a response to violence. And it does reduce tension, as I found when a Naga leader committed to a violent struggle came to our home several times.

The President of the Bodo tribe also came to learn to listen to God, and to discover how to change people. The Bodos control the narrow entrance to the North East, and can stop all movement to the rest of India for days. He persuaded his people to fight for their aspirations without violence and corruption. It has made an immense difference.

Sunny Mawiong comes from Meghalaya, and is devoting himself to resolving tensions in the North East. Together with the Outreach Team from Asia Plateau he organizes seminars and dialogues throughout the region. 'People from the rest of India and beyond are continuously joining us,' he says, 'and this has created a strong spirit in our work. A lot of communities are looking for alternatives and are responding to the spirit of lofC. I've made a commitment to work with the leadership in North East India towards a non-violent approach and I have found hope for the region.'

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Sweden

Rishabh Khanna: I grew up in India and came to Sweden five years ago. People from 140 countries live in Sweden, particularly in Solintuna and Järva where we work. Some come from traumatic situations, and trauma that is not healed is transferred to the next generation.

In 2013 Sweden had one of its worst riots in 200 years. We studied the causes. We found tensions along ethnic lines – conflict between clans within the Somali diaspora, among Kurds and others. Some children face an identity crisis because they don't feel completely Swedish nor fully part of their own community. Some turn to crime and vandalism. So we started Hope in Järva.

In 2015 we conducted a training course for 25 leaders from diaspora groups including former militia from Somalia. They then hosted dialogues on burning issues in their communities, such as housing. Soon there were groups working on these issues. One problem is the clash between parents, who come with the culture of their country of origin, and their children, who grow up in Swedish culture. In 2016 we brought together parents and children at learning festivals. Discussion, followed by times of quiet reflection, brought new insights to many.

Then we brought together police, local government officers and young people. Some of them have decided to meet regularly. Every two months they have an open space where they gather without an agenda, just to have a time of reflection together.

Nik Dahlström: The Hope in Järva project equipped us to work with migrant bodies. Now we are running a government-supported project with asylum seekers, who may wait two or three years for a decision about their future. How can their life be worthwhile whether they return or stay; how do they learn Swedish; how do they learn about Swedish society; how do they learn about wellbeing and taking care of themselves inwardly?

We also work with the EU Migrants as Re-Builders project, a collaboration between Spain, UK, Turkey and Sweden with an educational focus. In another project, Science City, we work with the business sector. Business does not have a good connection to grassroots society, and we have helped to make that link. This has led us to hold an annual event when we bring people from many backgrounds together to talk about current issues.

Antero Tikkanen: The Swedish lofC fellowship has gone through an inner crisis like other places – who we are and what is the core of our work. Previously full-timers were unpaid and then in 2013 we started employing people. Now we are in a process of looking towards collaboration with the other Nordic countries. We are increasingly connected to European and international teams.



Scenes from the Sangam

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SOMETHING IN THE WATER

What does it really mean to build trust across the world's divides? Sionne Neely, Director of Marketing and Communications for IofC US, describes one way in which IofC in Richmond, Virginia, is addressing systemic barriers to reconciliation.



During the event we launched the Narrative Change Collaborative, a 12-month programme in which creative visionaries will unearth and share untold histories about our city. Kenyan artist Nzilani Simu led two workshops on East African hand lettering and kanga pattern making. She also displayed designs created for the Narrative Change Collaborative and took part in a series of conversations.

The National Day of Racial Healing is a nationwide event, created by the WK Kellogg Foundation, under the theme of 'Truth, Racial Healing and Transformation' (TRHT). Richmond is one of 14 cities which have received a multi-year grant to mark the day each January and IofC USA is leading the process in Richmond.

You can learn more about these events, and the TRHT programme, on the [IofC US website](http://www.iofc.org).

2019 marks 400 years since the first enslaved Africans arrived in a strange new world – the tumultuous beginnings of a nation-state called the United States of America. With increased national and global efforts for inclusive histories, truth and reconciliation processes and racial equity, how far have we come in 400 years?

On 21 January (Dr Martin Luther King Jr Day) and 22 January (National Day of Racial Healing), IofC US organized Something's in the Water, a free two-day creative event, exploring the journey of our city, Richmond, Virginia, and our country towards truth, racial healing and transformation. We partnered with more than 30 collaborators including artists, cultural historians, creative influencers, grassroots activists, non-profit and community-based organizations.

Over 250 people enjoyed conversations, installations, exhibitions, workshops, film screenings, live music, DJ dance mashups, food and drink. We approached healing from a point of 'tactile communications', using art, performance, and creativity as forms of connection, facilitation, and dialogue. We also held 'Artivism' activities for children and young people and exhibited the works they created: drawings, paintings, collages, and puzzles.



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IN CONVERSATION

Jaella Brockman and Tracie Mooneyham talk to the president of Initiatives of Change Indonesia, Irna Yugaswatie.

When did you decide to be a part of lofC?

I first found lofC in 2005. As a teenager I used to have a lot of conflict with my mum. I ran out of the house and decided not to go back. During this time, the lofC team came to visit my campus. After the quiet time session and sharing, I saw my mum from a different angle.

After I got married I moved to Lampung, on a different island from Jakarta where most of the lofC team live. I reconnected with lofC in 2013, when work sent me back to Jakarta. I realized then that lofC is my home, another family.

I train teachers in how to use technology in the classroom. For the last four years my husband and I have been building a training company, Smart Generations of Indonesia. We have about 20 people working with us. I am responsible for HR.

What does 'trustbuilding' and 'outreach' mean to your team?

Most of our team are in their 30s, the time when you build a family. So going out and reaching more people is challenging. We are young and energetic but sometimes we have too little time.

Trustbuilding is like a bridge. To make a bridge, you may need to bend some vertical structures, but you must not break them and you need to make sure they are connected to each other.

Outreach means crossing the bridge to known and unknown places. Through that, we learn and share and inspire and get inspired. It's not comfortable. Both sides need to bend. But through that 'panic zone', we learn. Trust widens our learning zone, as we lower our ego and talk to each other.

How do you envision lofC's future?

We see lofC as a community, an organization, a home and a family. Sometimes, we tell others good things but we don't tell them in the right way. We should build a home that allows us to teach each other in patience and truth. And where we walk the talk. Sometimes we promote quiet time but forget to take it for ourselves.

There is a saying in Islam, that if you see something that needs change, you must use action to change it. If that is not possible, use your tongue to let people know it needs change. And if you can't do or say anything, at least act it/keep it in your heart and don't conform to it.



What are the main challenges facing global youth in the next decades?

Humans need to get back to be human. This is getting more difficult because of technology and the speed at which we live our lives.

With Social Media you may get close to people who are far away, but you may also get further from those who are close to you. We should go offline more. It is different to have offline interpersonal relationships.

We young people need to regain a feeling of what it means to be human, to be trusted. We need to overcome our challenges and not pass on the greed that was practised by previous generations. Don't encourage us to do more damage to nature. Trust us to fix it, and don't create more damage for us to fix.

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IN CONVERSATION

How does your team encourage young people to be the change they would like to see in this world?

I am lucky to have an amazing team. I think the best way to encourage them is to allow them to be the best version of who they are, and to express things in their own words. Words like 'reconciliation' are difficult for millennials to connect to: substitute them with softer words like 'love'. When we introduce the idea of 'quiet times', we don't use this term. Instead, we talk of pausing or reflection.

We have a programme focused on stock saving. People don't like the idea that Indonesia will soon be owned by foreigners. You can invest a few coins in national stocks and by doing so buy back your own country. People want to invest, and be a part of Indonesia's growth.

Our network mainly focuses on education. We visit schools and play the games we used to play as children. Games like these are now largely replaced by online games. We also have dancing classes. Indonesia may be the only place where the lofC Life Matters Course includes Zumba training!

Every morning at 9 am we post a quiet time input on Instagram. The content is deleted after 24 hours. We have been doing this for two years now. People often repost it or give us feedback.

What would you like to say to lofC International?

Please involve more young people in national and international projects. They may have crazy ideas and crazy ways of doing things, but bear with them. If you trust them, the results are excellent. Some of our young people designed reusable drinking bottles and other products with the lofC logo, and we're now selling them with a campaign to use less plastic.

There are three types of people: those who make it happen, those who let it happen, and those who asked what happened. We would like to make things happen.



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REFLECTION

After seven years of Creators of Peace (CoP) sessions in Damascus and a Peace Circle last year in Lebanon, Syrian women from different backgrounds joined Lebanese women in February to train as CoP facilitators. The training sessions were led by Marie Chaftari and Iman Al Ghafari, CoP's first Arabic-speaking trainers, with Kate Monkhouse. They were organized by Fighters for Peace and funded by the Canadian Embassy. Iman Al Ghafari reflects on the experience.

Our group consisted of younger and older women from multiple faith backgrounds, different political opinions and lifestyles. They all showed their readiness to learn how to run Creators of Peace Circles and agreed about the necessity of bridging trust across divides. However, although we may think that we are open-minded, that our hearts can accept all people and that we are ready to commit, when a shock touches our ego we may need to re-think. Do our minds and thoughts reflect honesty, purity, unselfishness and love? It is like when a stone is thrown into a quiet river, hits the bottom and brings out all the hidden rubbish that has been accumulating there.

Our participants were full of excitement, but then a cultural misunderstanding occurred. Many hidden stereotypes were triggered. All of us got to live through a situation where building trust was required. A volcano of emotions erupted when one participant expressed her anger about a comment and then another question led to a huge tension. The group cried and felt hopeless and helpless. Is building peace and trust realistic?

History is filled with conflicts. Our lives have all had sadness and misery. Pain that has accumulated appears through such accusations as 'your people are behind my pain'. We so easily forget that we can see the past through people around us today.

Creators of Peace aims to be a safe zone for everyone. It is also a place where we invite everyone to reflect on her fears, needs and expectations, her 'circles of concerns'.

These were some wonder-filled days as the women showed courage and willingness to overcome their misunderstandings and differences. They want to rebuild their country. Even though these dialogues can be so hard, as one woman said, 'the positive dialogue starts here'. The training programme enabled participants to dialogue with one another about the challenges they face, to learn the skills needed to host Creators of Peace conversations back home and to begin new relationships of understanding. They all left ready to take up the task of bringing other women together.

Creators of Peace women will continue to make their contribution in our beloved country of Syria. Within just a month of the end of this training programme, the group hosted a celebration for International Women's Day to encourage women from different communities to see the possibilities for peace. One participant said, 'We needed this, we need to come out of our shell.'



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'A big "Thank You!" to everyone who contributed their time, talents, and resources to the creation of this quarterly global update. It is our aim to provide you with information on how our network of dedicated members is creating the change they wish to see in the world. If you have thoughts or feedback on how we can make this publication better, please email us at editorial@iofc.org.'

Tracie Mooneyham, Content Editor

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