



June 2015

Newsletter of Initiatives of Change USA

Issue No. 32

Greetings!

There is now a written report from the [Healing History conference](#). It is published online but if you would like us to send hard copies please be in touch with our office.

While our main focus was on the conference in the first part of the year several other important things were happening. In this issue we report on the launch of Creators of Peace Circles in Washington, DC, the graduation of the 2015 class of the Community Trustbuilding Fellowship, the third in a series of Trustbuilding Forums, a fundraiser for the Caux Scholars Program and news of this year's class who are just arriving in Caux, Switzerland. And we will tell you more about the two international interns who helped to make the Healing History conference possible.



## Creators of Peace Circles

### Each of us can be a peacemaker

By Kathy Aquilina

The idea for Creators of Peace circles started with a memory of the traditional way women have gathered around the kitchen table to talk over the joys and sorrows of the day. This circle was often one of both comfort and empowerment. Jean Brown, from Australia, has developed a series of ten such kitchen table conversations that she calls "gathering points" around the concept of peace.



It's easy to understand the power and vital importance of this

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process when you are in a conflict situation. But others of us who may long for world peace in the abstract might wonder what has this to do with me? So this intentional process helps make us aware that each of us can be a peacemaker.

In early March fourteen women gathered in a home in Northern Virginia for the first Creators of Peace circle in the US. We focused on the same questions that form the basis of every circle convened in more than 40 countries where Creators of Peace is active: What is peace? How is peace created? How is it destroyed? What are the qualities of a peacemaker?

This Peace Circle was wonderfully facilitated by Willemijn Lambert of The Netherlands, assisted by Glory Amek Mbah from Cameroon. The safety of the circle allowed participants to share about the turning points in life. Some wrestled with painful hurts or feelings of betrayal and anger. But with a circle of friends willing to listen and an opportunity to reflect more deeply, we discovered the miracle of freedom and forgiveness.

Eight of the women decided they wanted to learn how to facilitate Peace Circles so they gathered for another weekend in March for two intensive days of learning and practice. Shoshana Faire, a professional facilitator from Australia, took us through our paces. Our session was enriched by the presence of two participants from Africa: Kula Zodua, a State Department Community Solutions Fellow from Liberia, and Gladys Kpukumu, who has worked with Hope Sierra Leone and has volunteered for the past four years at the IofC conference center in Caux, Switzerland.

Following the training in the DC area Shoshana spent a weekend in Barbados at the invitation of Monica Ellis and supported by Asiya Mohammed from Trinidad and Tobago began the first Peace Circle in the Caribbean.

A further twelve women got together in June for an introduction to the Creators of Peace circle process. Two were campus ministers from local universities, a third was a Muslim hospital chaplain. Sue Snyder of The Knowledge Network facilitated, and Jin In of 4 Girls Global Leadership joined me in facilitating. An exercise on listening to others highlighted how hard it is to focus on the other and keep oneself out of it. Falling short seems to be a human problem! One participant gave her evaluation of the day: "The session was very practical and healing, with a good emphasis on searching out those areas in our lives where we are not at peace. It was also good to hear the stories in which forgiveness and prayer or meditation brought peace."

More Creators of Peace circles are planned in the US. If you are interested in participating, please contact Kathy Aquilina at the IofC office in Washington, DC.

## Community Trustbuilding Fellowship

**There is still time to apply!**



Applications are coming in that promise another wonderfully diverse group of outstanding individuals for this year's Community Trustbuilding Fellowship.

**There are still some places available so we will continue with a rolling admission until the class is full!**

This unique program increases the capacity of community leaders to overcome divisions of race, culture, economics and politics by creating a network of skilled facilitators, capable team builders and credible role models.

## Caux Conferences 2015



**Exploring the human factor in global change**

**June 26-July 1**

Trust and Integrity in the Global Economy

**July 3-8**

Just Governance for Human Security

## Trustbuilding Forum Series

### Not a second chance but a first chance

Rob Corcoran



On August 15, 1996, Daryl Atkinson began serving a prison term with the Alabama Department of Corrections for dealing drugs - a first time offense. He was facing a possible 99 years behind bars but pled guilty in exchange for a 10-year sentence. He was

released after 40 months for good behavior. While in the "big house" he began to gain a vision for what his life could become.

Fortunately for Daryl, upon being released he was warmly accepted by his loving family who supported his desire for higher education first at a community college and then at the University of St. Thomas School of Law in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Today he is senior staff attorney with the Southern Coalition for Social Justice ([link is external](#)) and a passionate and eloquent advocate for criminal justice reform.

The US with just five percent of the world's population has 25 percent of its prison population. Between 1970 and 2005, the number of people incarcerated increased 700 percent, due mainly to the failed "war on drugs." African Americans constitute about 1 million of the total 2.3 million incarcerated population. If current trends continue, one in three black males born today can expect to spend time in prison during his lifetime.

"Mass incarceration is a symptom of a deeper American sickness," says Atkinson who spoke in Richmond on May 12 at a Trustbuilding Forum organized by Hope in the Cities in partnership with the YMCA which hosted the event, the Richmond Peace Education Center and the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities. "We have a bloodlust as a nation and we have not accounted for all the violence in our history that we have profited from." There has never been any accounting, he said, for the centuries of chattel slavery and Jim Crow repression. "To do this right we have to deal with structural racism and malignant capitalism." He called for "a Marshall Plan, not for giving communities a second chance but a first chance."

Atkinson's home state of North Carolina offers a case study on the inequity of current enforcement of drug laws. "People engage in criminality at the same rate," he said. The rate of drug use among whites and blacks is almost identical. Yet of those incarcerated for drug offenses in North Carolina, 53 percent are black and 23 percent are white. Latinos make up 17 percent.

Those exiting prison face a harsh and hostile environment: they are

#### July 10-14

Caux Dialogue on Land and Security

#### July 16-19

Addressing Europe's Unfinished Business

International Peace-Builders' Forum

#### July 27-August 2

CATS - Children and Adults - Partners for Change?

#### August 4-9

Seeds of Inspiration

#### August 10-15

Impact Initiatives Challenge

[More information](#)

## Caux Scholars in India

### Consider taking part!



The Caux Scholars Program-Asia Plateau (CSP-AP) in India is a 3-week program focused on the integration of sustainable development and peacebuilding. The invitation is to young leaders, community organizers, and scholars from different countries and cultural backgrounds, aged 21-35.

The program will be held from December 2015 to January 2016 (Exact dates to be confirmed). Contact our office for more information.

banned from many forms of employment; they have lost their voting rights and many have lost their driver's licenses due to failure to pay child support while in prison. Atkinson said that the only reason he succeeded was that he had "a loving family, food and shelter."

The audience broke into groups to discuss the implications for Richmond and how to mobilize a movement to address the issue. One participant noted that US Department of Education data analyzed by the Center for Public Integrity (link is external) show that Virginia schools refer students to law enforcement agencies at nearly three times the national rate. Virginia's referral rate is about 16 for every 1,000 students. Some of the individual schools with highest rates of referral - in one case 228 per 1,000 - were middle schools, whose students are usually from 11 to 14 years-old.

"The majority of people are of good will but working with bad information," said Atkinson. We need to know how we got here and how the unfair structures were created. We also need to understand the role of implicit bias. He noted that even African American police officers are influenced by the dominant public narrative and may be experiencing internalized oppression by coming to accept and live out the stereotypes that society communicates to them about their group.

"Simply changing the complexion of the decision makers without changing policies and practices will get the same results," said Atkinson who was recognized by the White House as a "Reentry and employment Champion of Change." However, he warned "there is no silver bullet." How do we change the situation? "One bite at a time."

## Healing History 2015 Update

### Moving the process forward

Susan Corcoran



At the heart of the Healing History conference were ten working groups that not only led the various breakout sessions but had begun a conversation before the conference and have continued to collaborate through phone calls and virtual meetings in the weeks since. Each one is developing a clear deliverable to move the process forward.

One of the groups that made use of every free moment during the conference for further discussion and planning is dealing with

## Website Update

<http://us.iofc.org>



In the last few weeks the Initiatives of Change website has undergone a facelift thanks to an amazing global web team spread across several continents.

It may not appear very different to you but it is now readable on a mobile phone. We are keeping pace with the demands of the modern world!

You can now easily explore the website, watch a video, read the latest news and even make a donation all on your phone.

## Refelctions

### Still unfolding as a trustbuilder

**Duron Chavis**, one of the 2015 class of the Community Trustbuilding Fellowship, is an activist, urban gardener and promoter of a green movement to bring healthy living to African American communities. He writes [here](#) about his experience:



museums and public history sites. Many of those in the group are from slave descendant communities whether in South Africa, the Netherlands, the United States or Curacao. They share a common commitment to tell the untold stories and give humanity to those who have been overlooked by history.

The group addressing sustainable economic development is planning for an ongoing partnership between the City of Richmond's Office of Community Wealth Building and the Wythenshaw Estates in Manchester, UK, one of Europe's most deprived urban



communities. Given the growing gang problem affecting the high poverty areas of Richmond, Greg Davis from the UK has expressed willingness to talk with Richmond officials about his work in Manchester and what he has learned about developing trust with gang leaders and channeling their organizational skills and intellect to the creation of small businesses.

Those focused on the social determinants of health (SDOH) are working on ideas to develop a curriculum and a training protocol to empower local residents as "champions" to advocate for policy change/resources needed to improve the structural forces influencing the SDOH in their community. This could be piloted in Richmond before sharing it with partners doing similar work around the country.

A very comprehensive plan has been put forward by those addressing the need to coordinate housing and education policy to promote school diversity. A starting place would be bringing school and housing officials together to address issues of segregation. The purpose would be to gain an in-depth understanding of the demographic characteristics and opportunity indicators of a community through high impact data and mapping and to develop collaborative structures for school and housing officials to work together. It will require educating the community and building support and buy-in for policies promoting equity and racial and economic diversity. Their proposal includes concrete policy options to explore at different levels of government.

Considerable energy and ideas were generated by the working group looking at how to use social media for constructive dialogue. This group is continuing to develop an idea of reaching out to the Starbucks corporation (after its failed attempt to initiate dialogues on race) and discover if a partnership could be established for future community dialogue.

The most exciting takeaways from the session on implicit bias in education were the curiosity and increased awareness of the topic, the desire to identify and eradicate the multiple ways in which implicit bias impacts our education system, and fresh understanding

The most important learning experience I took from the Community Trustbuilding Fellowship was the emphasis on the difference between facilitation and teaching. So many times we see a top-down model of community activism and engagement. The differentiation between facilitating a longitudinal process, crafting a space where those involved can create solutions together, versus teaching facts, data and techniques is so very important for improving the quality of sustainable community solutions. Learning to lean on my own personal narrative as a reference point but to be careful that what I bring into the room can shift the caliber of the experience for everyone involved has also been a big paradigm shift as well.

I am working in Petersburg and I have been very conscious to walk with the various stakeholders and partners in the development of the urban agriculture efforts we are developing. I have been very clear that we are not trying to take the lead on any efforts but that we are very interested in crafting a dialogue around the issues so that the community can do the work with us.

In that sense it is a recognition that the history of this street we are sitting on in Petersburg is alive and we are a part of its evolving narrative, while being intentional in how we move so that we don't overshadow the community itself. Also, I am being mindful of my own language and presence in the system while learning how to move across those tables that others may not feel comfortable to.

I think I am still unfolding as a trustbuilder. I honestly think that it is something you have to be ever cognizant of as you work in your

of the ways different identities intersect and influence how implicit bias operates.

Other reports are still to come and concrete plans will develop in the coming months.

## Two International Interns

### A journey of personal growth and discovery

*Glory Mbah Amek, from Cameroon, and Willemijn Lambert, from the Netherlands, recently came to Richmond for three months to work as interns and help with preparations for the Healing History Conference. They have also facilitated a Creators of Peace Circle and a training for facilitators in Washington, DC. **Randy Ruffin** interviewed them for Breakthroughs.*

Glory is in the final stage of completing her MA degree in English, the second official language of Cameroon. She is the volunteer coordinator of IofC programs in the littoral region where she lives and also has a small cosmetic business. Her initial contact with IofC came in 2008, when she represented her university at a youth leadership forum and found a new level of trust through the mutual storytelling and sharing of experiences. IofC has become a "way of life" for her and its guidelines have helped shape her life. Among other things, she sees "the need to forgive others not only because my bible tells me so, but also because it is the start of a healing process. This includes self-forgiveness as well."



Having encountered IofC's Creators of Peace (COP) initiative, which empowers women to be peace builders, at an all-African conference in 2012, Glory organized a peace circle in Cameroon and was then trained as a facilitator herself. Since then there have been peace circles in both English and French regions of the country.

Glory shared her interest in trustbuilding with Hope in the Cities' Tee Turner at last summer's *Just Governance* conference at the IofC center in Caux, Switzerland, and was invited by him to apply for this internship. Having held the preconception that "everything is so perfect" in the US, Glory was "surprised to see homeless people on the streets of Washington, DC," and also "overwhelmed by so much talk of racism and its impact on American society." But, she says, "I will be taking back home a lot of knowledge and experience gained from my stay here. It has been a journey of personal growth and rediscovery of some of my potential."

While in Cambodia working with an NGO for five months during her undergraduate studies, Willemijn met up with IofC's program Action

respective field. Being mindful, compassionate and selfless - willing to sacrifice that burning urge to speak sometimes to simply listen and reflect. Those are things that I have taken from the trustbuilding fellowship. That and new friends. I feel better about my place in the room regardless of class now as I see how we all bring value to the system as a whole and that no part is greater than the sum total of the pieces therein.

### A sustainable path to relationships of trust

*Charlotte Freeman has worked with Initiatives of Change for the past 3 years. She has now moved to the West Coast with her fiancé where she is also pursuing a PhD.*

As I look back on my last three years with Initiatives of Change (IofC), I am struck by the clear personal and professional growth that I have both experienced myself and witnessed in others.



The priority set on IofC's core values of absolute honesty, purity, unselfishness, and love allows relationships to be explicitly guided by these values - both within the office and beyond. I have learned that, while upholding these absolute values may force us to confront difficult conversations, when faced together, these challenges can be the most rewarding and sustainable paths to

for Life through colleagues. She loved meeting this very international group of people who seemed to be on the same wave length with her - they were on the road to leadership and were searching within themselves. Through the group she was connected with IofC in the Netherlands and later went to Caux and participated in a Peace Circle.



Willemijn had been studying international development, but her experience in Cambodia, working with the Alliance for Conflict Transformation, confirmed her growing interest in peace studies, and she pursued a Masters at Bradford University in the UK. After participating in a COP facilitators training in Oxford, she concluded that the peace circles complement the work that is

happening in the peacebuilding realm, and after organizing a peace circle in Bradford, she knew: "THIS is the work I'm called to do - creating safe spaces where wholeness and healing can start to happen." For the past three years Willemijn has been organizing and leading peace circles in the Netherlands.

Sensing that it was time for an experience abroad, last October Willemijn started to feel pulled towards America. One and a half weeks later, without any prior communication, she received an invitation for a three month internship. "I then knew: this was meant to happen."

"Looking back on nearly three months in the USA, I recognize changes in me. I recognize that we have a lot of work to do in the Netherlands with regard to addressing our history and involvement in the slave trade... We tend to think that racism is a problem of America, and that we ... don't need to deal with it. We do need to deal with it, and the pushing it under the carpet sometimes scares me. I know what I have experienced in the past months is just a tiny bit of the big cake America is. I'm hungry for more!"

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## Caux Scholars Program 2015

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### The collective impact of a common purpose

Jitka Hromek-Vaitla

With the world focused on the tragedy of the earthquake in Nepal, the guests at the annual Caux Scholars fundraiser, on May 1st at the McGuire Woods Law firm in Washington DC, watched a video created by 2003 alumni and current BBC reporter Abdujalil Abdurasulov about the situation in Nepal. He was hosted by incoming Nepalese scholars Ankit Khanal and Jini Agrawal who shared their hopes about rebuilding their country.

relationships of trust. This is true on a societal level as well as with inter-personal interactions.

I look forward to maintaining this standard of compassion in my personal and professional life as I move forward as well. After four years in Washington, DC, my fiancé, Woodrow, and I moved to San Jose, California where Woodrow has started a job as the Associate Director of Medical Programs and Impact for ReSurge International, a non-profit organization that conducts emergency surgeries and medical training in impoverished communities around the world.

I am continuing my Educational Doctorate in Organizational Leadership at Pepperdine University and also launching my own organizational development consulting practice in Silicon Valley. My consulting work will focus on helping high-tech companies create cultures of inclusion that encourage greater diversity in the work force. Diversity and inclusion have been major challenges for the high-tech industry and I know that my consulting work will benefit greatly from the value I have learned to place on absolute honesty and love while working for IofC.

Despite my professional focus on addressing social justice through private sector reform, I am still very committed to the nonprofit sector where I spent the first decade of my career. In addition to serving on nonprofit boards, I will also offer reduced-rate nonprofit management consulting services so that I can give back to organizations like IofC that have shaped both my career and my character.

I know that, despite my transition



Masters of ceremony for the evening were Anjum Ali, IofC board member, and Mark Kennedy (CSP 2013), a lawyer in Washington DC. Eight other alumni attended.

Lauren Leigh Hinthorne (CSP 2003), who is presently a fellow at USAID, said: "I was a bit apprehensive as I rode the elevator up to the CSP fundraiser. It had been over 10 years since my last contact with Initiatives of Change and I wasn't sure what to expect. I entered the room a bit hesitantly and Kathy Aquilina immediately came running over to greet me. From that point on, the evening felt like sort of a homecoming. I am thankful for having reconnected with Barry Hart and Ajay Rao after all these years, and am deeply inspired by the accomplishments of other alumni. But above all, I am reminded of the collective impact that is possible when such a diverse group of people unites behind a common purpose. I wish those 'headed up the mountain' a very productive summer!"

Two 2015 CSP incoming scholars were present to represent this year's class at the fundraiser: Alice Cao from Vietnam who is studying at Berea College in Kentucky and Stequita Hankton who is a medical student in the Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine.

Most of the 2015 Caux Scholars sent in videos to express what coming to Caux means to them. An interview with Jose Carlos Leon Vargas (CSP 2005), entrepreneur for the poor in Oaca, Mexico, and Tim Carrington, a contributor to the Caux Scholars Program, showed the direct impact sponsors have on our scholars' work.

Emmanuel Ohin, Minister-Counsellor and the Chargé d'Affaires of the Benin Embassy saluted the young peacebuilders. Reflecting on the nature of ignorance, Mr. Ohin noted that religious extremism, intolerance, and fundamentalism are borne of ignorance. He said that people who are certain of having the truth on their side feed these scourges, only to realize later that they only have a very small part of the truth.

David Best, Public Diplomacy and Cultural Counselor at the Swiss Embassy spoke about how CSP embodies Switzerland's spirit of consensus-building.

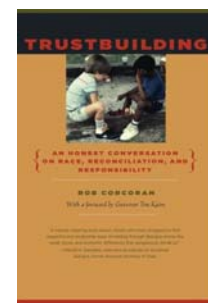
Randy Ruffin, CSP Chair, and Kathy Johnson, long-term supporter, were honored as CSP contributors of the year. Thanks to them, other long-time and new contributors, and to the generosity of many IofC members, we achieved the goal of raising funds for three

away from full-time employment with IofC, I will remain involved with IofC's important racial reconciliation work. Our country faces formidable challenges when it comes to addressing social issues with honesty and love. The recent tragic shooting in Charleston further serves to highlight the need for brave, honest, and compassionate confrontation of the seething racism that still runs rampant in the United States. This courageous and challenging step is imperative if healing is to occur for our society. IofC has incredible tools and experience to help facilitate this process. I have no doubt that the IofC network will be instrumental in moving our society forward to a healthy future, together. I look forward to continuing to support this work in every way I can.

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## Hope & inspiration

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***Trustbuilding***  
by Rob Corcoran

Read Rob Corcoran's latest blog  
[\*Migration as a gift\*](#)



full scholarships. We also appreciate Don King, IofC USA's board member, whose law firm McGuire Woods was the venue for the event.

Now the scholars are arriving in Caux with much excitement and anticipation. There are 21 scholars from 19 countries. The program commences on June 26 and run to July 26. Each year is different and now we wait to see this group bond and grow as peacemakers. You will be hearing from them in the future.

## Community Trustbuilding Fellowship

### There is no such thing as a comfortable risk

Rob Corcoran

"Change starts with me!" says Ebony Walden, a city planner and consultant, summing up her key learning as part of the 2014-2015 Community Trustbuilding Fellowship class which concluded in March. Ebony was one of 30 community leaders from Richmond and five other cities who took part in the five-module residential program.



Mural done by Willemijn Lambert

"I learned the importance of my own spiritual development and practice as a change agent. There is a level of groundedness and self-awareness that is necessary to engage authentically and peacefully around difficult subjects. "I am also more willing to be open and engage others with an ear toward listening. I feel like I have a better understanding of my own limitations, predispositions and growth areas, of the role of history in present day situations and some tools to design and facilitate a dialogue around community issues."

Others shared similar lessons that are informing their life and work. "The Community Trustbuilding Fellowship enabled me to converse openly and honestly with people from diverse backgrounds about topics such as race, religion, and socio-economic status - topics often discussed only in silos of like-minded people," says Cassie Price, Community Initiatives and Program Manager at the Bonner Center for Civic Engagement, University of Richmond.

"Through workshops on implicit bias and the history of race relations, I gained insight into my own perception of reality and why and how that aligns with, or differs from, others' perception of

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### Initiatives of Change, USA

is part of a diverse global network with an 80-year track record of peacebuilding, conflict transformation and forging partnerships across divides of race, class, religion and politics.

#### Our vision

We inspire a vision of community where a commitment to reconciliation and justice transcends competing identities and interests.

#### Our mission

We equip leaders to build trust in diverse communities through a process of personal change, inclusive dialogue, healing historical conflict and teambuilding

#### Our focus

We connect core values with personal and public action with a focus on racial reconciliation, economic inclusion and interfaith understanding.

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<http://us.iofc.org>

reality. I learned to be more sensitive to others' perspectives and to practice self-reflection more regularly. Perhaps most importantly, I am using my heightened awareness of implicit bias to inform my interactions with people both on- and off-campus."

Jordan Starbuck also describes "a widening of my lens through the acknowledgement and understanding of unconscious or unintended bias as it relates to racism and the potential for its influence." She works on energy and environmental design with Georgia-Pacific in Savannah, Ga. She says the class gave her "the confidence to inspire trust among others" and that she learned the critical importance of demonstrating and leading by example.

Mark Gordon is CEO of St Francis Medical Center Bon Secours in Richmond. He writes, "We all share an inescapable truth: where you come from determines who you are. From this reality, your life experiences, how you think, and how you act in this world will be shaped. No matter the endeavor, your success over a lifetime will in large part be determined by your ability to engage in relationships that either hinder or advance your chosen pursuit. Initiatives of Change is a strong tool to build your self-awareness of your place in the world and is a diagnostic tool of your courage to expand beyond your blind spots."

"I entered the Fellowship program working in Jewish-Muslim interfaith and inter-cultural relations," reports Parvez Khan, a business and personal coach in Washington. "Gaining a deeper understanding of Caucasian and African American race relations enlightened me and also gave me a domestic context for the rift I have always known with my Jewish brothers and sisters."

"Being raised to think lesser of African Americans (and really everyone except 'us'), I now feel more empowered than ever in my work as a business and personal coach and interfaith worker in applying the principles and practices of inclusion. I look forward to creating an awesome dialogue among Jewish and Muslim interfaith and inter-cultural workers this fall and winter."

Darsheel Kaur is a community organizer from Dayton, Ohio. She says, "My favorite part was really taking the time to understand ourselves and our work in terms of the values that drive us and what they look like in action. My work has been directly impacted as I had to view what I was doing in different dialogues, meetings, and direct actions through the lens of building bridges and building trust. I more clearly understand now how trust is the glue that holds communities together in the long-term, and I now understand the small, everyday steps necessary to build relationships and trust. One of those things is integrity."

Several participants spoke of a new willingness to move beyond their comfort zones, recognizing that "there is no such thing as a comfortable risk." As one person put it, "A new world has been revealed to me. It is difficult and different but I am excited to be part of it!"

## Follow-up Links

[Initiatives of Change Hope in the Cities \(HIC\) Caux Scholars Program](#)  
[IofC on Facebook](#)  
[Trustbuilding on Facebook](#)  
[HIC on Facebook](#)