

Annual Report 2014

During 2014 and, unfortunately, at the start of 2015, so much has occurred that gives all of us pause. Tragedies, most recently in France, but as well in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Nigeria, Ferguson, New York, Seattle, and too many of our communities to name can color our thinking. But while we are sobered by these events, we are also grateful for the opportunity each of us has to make a difference and change these happenings.

Our supporters, partner peacebuilding organizations, staff, and several new initiatives helped to make 2014 an important milestone year to mark our 10th anniversary. We strengthened the capabilities of The Peace Alliance, Peace Alliance Educational Institute, and the Student Peace Alliance to educate policy makers, the media, and the public about the availability of peacebuilding tools and policies that can serve as proven alternatives to more punitive, militaristic, and incarcerating approaches too prevalent in our society.

We are determined to contribute even more in 2015.

Peacebuilding and Violence Prevention Advocacy

We continued to build our community-based grassroots network of **Peace Alliance Action Teams**. Expanding our initial effort from late 2014, we were able to form 20 strong Teams from all regions of the country such as Seward AK, San Francisco CA, Chicago IL, Long Island NY, and Gainesville FL. Others are still forming. *(Photo from this Fall's national Action Team "group start" tour in San Bernadino, CA.)*

Specifically, during the past year our Action Teams, in cooperation with Peace Alliance volunteers in our broader grassroots network, made over **50,000 contacts with Congressional offices** through letters, emails, and phone calls; had some **40 Letters to the Editor and Op-eds published**; generated four radio interviews; succeeded in getting major editorials written by such publications as *The Baltimore Sun*; and conducted close to **200 actual Congressional office advocacy visits** and



information drops. Additionally, we held over **60 virtual telephone training sessions** and close to **30 on-site training workshops** with our volunteers and Action Team members around the country.

Impact: We believe these results educated and inspired thousands of folks around the country and placed the advantages of peacebuilding alternatives on the radar screens of numerous policy makers and the media.

Student Peace Alliance

The Student Peace Alliance has grown significantly over the past year to include a dozen chapters and affiliate student groups on college campuses, and an expanding network of individual members. Recognizing that many students are interested in getting involved with us but are unable to commit their time to building chapters on campus, we are creating more opportunities for individual involvement and using this as an opportunity to build a larger scale student movement.

We have been and will continue to work with faculty around the country to help build and sustain chapters. Faculty members are not only sharing information with their students about SPA, but are actively volunteering to advise chapters and ensure that there is a continued presence on campus.
(Photo from KSU campus event.)

Over the past year, we developed a strategic partnership with STAND, a global student network that takes action to prevent genocide and international conflict, to create the Campaign to Prevent Identity Based Violence (fondly known as PIBV). Our PIBV campaign is an action-based, monthly campaign that allows students to explore the effects of various types of identity-based violence such as violence against women and LGBTQ people, religious violence, racial violence and more. When we better understand the causes of this type of violence, we become better equipped as a movement to prevent and resolve it. Students learn about these issues from both the domestic and international perspective, and are provided with two quick actions every month.

We are also working with students to help them advocate for the Youth PROMISE Act, and have begun to develop new campaigns and proactive initiatives that will supplement a growing national movement against mass incarceration, police violence, and issues of racism in our justice system. We are providing opportunities for students to bring peacebuilding tools into their lives and their communities, and ensuring that as the movement forges ahead, we can help to bring viable solutions to the table.

Impact:

SPA members are building a growing youth peace movement, with more solid



connections in campuses and in their communities across the country. Over the past year, our students have generated over 30 letters to Congress, 75 letters to Governors, multiple letters to the editor published in school and local newspapers, and have organized dozens of community and advocacy events on campus. They are educating their peers, taking action in person and online, and working to build and expand a movement.

Legislative Priorities:

In 2014, our legislative priorities continued to call for funding of the **US Institute of Peace** (USIP), **Conflict Stabilization Operations** (CSO) and the **Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation** (CMM), and the **Complex Crises Fund** (CCF). In cooperation with the Prevention and Protection

Working Group, a 30-member coalition of human rights, humanitarian, religious, and peace organizations working to improve U.S. policies and capacities to prevent violent conflict and mass atrocities, and to protect civilians threatened by such crises, we pushed for added clarity and Presidential support of the **Atrocities Prevention Board**.

Regarding primary domestic policy priorities, we worked hard and effectively to show strong support for the **Youth PROMISE Act** (YPA) and other justice initiatives such as the REDEEM Act and Smarter Sentencing Act; a **US Department of Peacebuilding** (DoP); anti-bullying; and violence against women legislation.

Impact: Once again this year our efforts successfully helped secure continued funding for USIP - \$35.3 million, CSO - \$38.5 million, CMM - \$26 million, and CCF - \$50 million, despite increased budgetary pressure due to the various machinations in Congress including the 2014 elections.

One of our Action Team leaders even helped pass the Death In Custody Reporting Act (HR 1447), by talking her Senator out of putting a hold on the bill in the Senate, which would have derailed it.

Due to the gridlock that occurred in Congress this 113th Session, it was not possible to push YPA over the top, despite helping to gather over 130 co-sponsors in the House and Senate. Nevertheless, the number of Representatives and Senators who were educated and made aware of their constituents' desires has been dramatically increased. We fully expect to build upon these successes and have a fruitful effort made in the 114th Session.

Awareness continues to grow through the Department of Peacebuilding legislation. Co-sponsors increased to 35 in the House and awareness of the issues within it increased with our advocacy.

The California Democratic Party (CDP) adopted language pushed for by the



California Peace Alliance calling for promotion of national institutions “based on the organizing principles of violence prevention and nonviolent conflict resolution, utilizing and developing a network of ‘best practice’ peacebuilding policies and programs, both within UN member states, and externally among nations.” They also succeeded in getting new peacebuilding language into the 2014 CDP Platform, adding to what was included in the 2013 platform.

Coalition Building:

In 2014 we continued our involvement and participation with a number of collaborative partnerships including events and actions with groups such as the Prevention and Protection Working Group, Summer of Peace & Shift Network, STAND, SGI-USA, United Religions Initiative, Alliance for Peacebuilding, River Phoenix Center for Peacebuilding, Roots Action, BayNVC, Global Alliance for Ministries and Infrastructures of Peace, National Association of Community and Restorative Justice, Peace Ambassador Training, and others.

To further the cause of the Youth PROMISE Act, we played a leadership role in advocating for its passage. We worked closely with ACLU, National Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Coalition, Coalition for Juvenile Justice, and Representative Scott’s and Senator Landrieu’s offices, to attract a variety of relevant partners to the effort.

Impact: In concert with these organizations, we exposed a large cohort of policy makers and the public to the availability and benefits of alternative cost saving non-punitive, non-militaristic alternatives to resolving conflict, and to reducing youth incarceration. Further, we laid the groundwork for future success in gaining passage of this bill and other important legislation. In some arenas, the tide is turning. A substantial bi-partisan shift is happening in the area of criminal justice reform, where the “tough on crime” punitive approaches are finally being seen across the political spectrum as ineffective. Openness to more prevention and intervention is growing.

Restorative Justice:

In 2014 we focused on Legislative Advocacy, Network Building, National Mobilization and Media, Education and Grassroots Advocacy.

Among our activities, we built on last year’s success in Colorado by advising Massachusetts and Washington State, each of which is developing bills to increase awareness and use of restorative practices. Further, we expanded our collaboration with the National Association of Community and Restorative Justice, a national professional association for educators and practitioners and others interested in restorative and community justice. We have been working to lead efforts with their national policy committee to look at how we can move forward with national and state policies in support of RJ.

By way of Restorative Justice on the Rise, where we launched a new website platform (www.restorativejusticeontherise.org), Peace Alliance e-blasts, an

enhanced website, and relationships we built, we continued to illuminate the best ways to mobilize and inspire a network that is active, willing to cross collaborate, and responds to actions that support RJ principles.

We secured key funding grants in this category to help continue to grow our RJ efforts.

In response to the tragic school shooting in Seattle, we partnered with the Seattle Restorative Justice organization to offer advice on restorative systems and responses. A goal has been to establish an ongoing prevention and intervention capability to avoid similar situations from happening.



Impact: RJ on the Rise has continued to influence thousands of people from around the world to participate and learn about these principles and programs. It has generated more effective advocates and kept more individuals out of the school-to-prison pipeline and into constructive social involvement.

Importantly, the Colorado victory was able to inspire others to try and replicate this success. In addition to the Massachusetts and Washington State dialogues mentioned above, we have had discussions with several other jurisdictions that also are seeking counsel on how to proceed.

Global Alliance of Ministries and Infrastructures for Peace

We have continued to dialogue with and support The Global Alliance for Ministries and Infrastructures for Peace a worldwide community of civil society campaigns, organizations, committed citizens, and elected and appointed government officials from over 40 countries. The mission of GAMIP is to collaborate with and support governments and civil society around the world working to establish national ministries and departments of peace, and also to support efforts to develop local, regional, and national peace councils, peace academies, and other effective infrastructures for peace.

Impact:

The international involvement continues to grow as new people continue to take up these issues with their own governments and people.

Our Reach

Our reach is also expanding. Our website and social media traffic is growing. This year we had over **175,000 hits on our website, with over 75,000 unique people visiting**. Our **Facebook reach was well over 150,000 people**. We also had **peace-oriented articles published** and spotlighted in **Huffington Post**,

Common Dreams, and other key media outlets. **PBS** and **Free Speech TV** approached us to partner with them on raising awareness of important peace related films.

We hosted an Event in DC called **DC Mindfully**, which brought together leading luminaries in the mindfulness movement. Our guest speakers included Congressman Tim Ryan, Tara Brach and Peace Alliance Advisory Board Director, Sylvia Boorstein.

Looking Ahead to 2015

In 2015, we intend to continue to expand and empower our highly trained Action Teams and Student Peace Alliance partners throughout the country. We have made a strong start and will continue to recruit committed leaders to assemble dedicated teams in their communities. But, we hope to accomplish much more. The Peace Alliance clearly has a firm foundation on which to build in order to aggressively affect a comprehensive movement to mitigate violence and reduce conflict.

We will shortly launch an inclusive **“Be the Movement”** program offering a multi-faceted pathway for individuals and organizations to have a significant impact on peacebuilding in their own lives, their communities, and among nations. This program focuses specifically on spotlighting and moving forward five key peace cornerstones: Cultivating Personal Peace, Teaching Peace in Schools, Empowering Community Peacebuilding, Humanizing the Justice System, and Fostering International Peacebuilding. We will work hard in the coming year and beyond to make this a reality, recognizing that this will not be done in a year and cannot be accomplished by The Peace Alliance alone. That is why we will continue to reach out to other peacebuilding and social justice organizations to ~~work~~ align with us to create and expand impactful partnerships and affiliations. Our ultimate goal is to encourage policy-makers, the media, and the public to make peacebuilding approaches our societal norm and a movement that is unstoppable.

Legislatively we will continue to advocate for passage of the Youth PROMISE Act and to support the vision embedded in the US Department of Peacebuilding legislation. We will do so by actively supporting the policies and programs that are consistent with that vision. We will continue to participate with the Prevention and Protection Working Group to advance the cause of peacebuilding in U.S. foreign policy and stay apprised of other legislation at both the Federal and state levels that are supportive of our mission.

Additionally, as a very relevant, and rapidly growing, component of conflict resolution, particularly with at risk youth, we will continue to expand our efforts to inform and gain implementation of Restorative Justice efforts.

To these ends, we will be hosting a national conference in Washington DC in the Fall of 2015, bringing together Peace Alliance supporters from around the nation to descend upon our nation's capitol and urge our leaders to get behind our priorities.

We will also be launching some exciting new outreach efforts, including a new organizational peacebuilding video about our work. We likely will be partnering with the filmmakers who have created an illuminating new documentary entitled, "Peacemakers," for the national rollout of the film. We also received a Grant from Google AdWords, which could be valued at \$120,000 in Google search results ads about our work. We feel all these efforts will help broaden our reach.

We look forward to working with so many of you to accomplish these and other important goals.