



The Peace Alliance



The Peace Alliance
Educational Institute

Mid-year 2015 Report

July 30, 2015

It's that time again and I want to provide you with a formal report of all we've done in the first half of 2015 – and there has been much to report. Perhaps, the greatest sense of accomplishment has been the highly successful launch of our **“Be the Movement”** initiative. We worked on crafting this important peacebuilding framework for over a year. Judging by the broad positive reaction to its launch, it is clear that our efforts were well worth it.

Of course, **“Be the Movement”** is centered around five critical Cornerstones — Empowering Community Peacebuilding; Humanizing Justice Systems; Teaching Peace in Schools; Cultivating Personal Peace; and Fostering International Peace. Teaching Peace in Schools seems to have attracted the most interest, but certainly all Cornerstones have earned amazing support.

So what does this all mean? We are committed to using this initiative to empower and inspire large numbers of dedicated advocates and the general public to take a meaningful step for peace. We realize that in order to reach our goal of a million-strong movement, we will need considerable support from other organizations and their networks. That is why we are so pleased to have recently been approached by the Oprah Winfrey Network and Archbishop Desmond Tutu's organization to explore ways to cooperate on many of our shared values and beliefs. And, we have begun to work with many others, as well.

Since its launch, it has been our intention to keep **“Be the Movement”** and the **Cornerstones** on people's radar screens by providing details of what is being done in each Cornerstone's area and continuing to expand our reach. We have seen tremendous feedback and offers not only committing to action, but requesting collaborations to move forward.

Our new promotional video, “Peacebuilding: Our Next Frontier,” has been seen by thousands. The feedback on it has also been great.

We have announced plans to hold a national conference in October built around the initiative and its five Cornerstones. The Conference agenda has already been developed and we are aggressively reaching out to potential expert speakers and panelists. An important component of the Conference will be in-depth grassroots training led by noted author and grassroots-organizing expert, Sam Daley-Harris, Founder of the highly respected anti-poverty group, RESULTS. We are offering a sliding scale registration fee designed to encourage diverse attendee participation and a very discounted rate for students and young people. Also, we have been soliciting help to allow for scholarships to be offered to those who would not ordinarily be able to afford a trip to Washington, DC. As we continue to build a

movement toward increased peace and justice, we are finding new and creative ways to ensure that there is diverse participation and representation in all that we do.

Grassroots Field Activities

We continue to expand our grassroots efforts by providing the means to empower and inspire citizen advocates across the country. We have complemented our general grassroots efforts through the formation of community-based Action Teams committed to taking identical, agreed upon actions each month to build a reinforcement factor into organizing efforts. We are achieving results in several ways many of which are listed below.

We continue to provide a Monthly Action Call every second Saturday, which includes discussion with a special guest speaker, celebration of grassroots victories, and coaching on the Monthly Action – supplementing the two-page Monthly Action Sheet we provide. Our Monthly Actions are strategically chosen to advance our field's relationships with their members of Congress and the professional media – creating political will for breakthroughs in peacebuilding policy.

Also, we provide four coaching calls per month to Action Team Leaders, helping them to learn from each other and from us about effectively supporting their teams to move beyond challenges they may encounter.

Field Work – Launching New Teams and Solidifying Existing Teams

In March, National Field Director, Dan Kahn, visited 10 cities in 16 days – launching two new teams and helping eight existing teams expand their numbers and deepen their strength.

Added Depth and Capability via Team Training Modules

Starting in late March, we began offering a series of four 90-minute training modules to each Team – prioritizing newly formed teams. These modules enhance the team-bonding process, and deepen the team's skills and understandings. Four teams have now completed all four modules, and several others are in the midst of the process. We already have seen a steep climb in the achievements of teams participating in these trainings – gaining focus and momentum in their communications with Congress, the media, and community allies.

Student Peace Alliance

This year the Student Peace Alliance has organized around a series of campaigns that focus on issues of access to education for people impacted by the justice system. This spring, SPA Director, Sally Kaplan, visited Princeton University to work with students, activists, and formerly incarcerated individuals on forming the **National Campaign to Abolish the Box**. This campaign aims to remove questions from the Common Application and individual university forms that require students to disclose their history with the justice system and school punishment systems, even if for relatively minor offenses. Requiring disclosure at the beginning of such applications more frequently than not results in the application being rejected and qualified applicants never having their full attributes considered. This process disproportionately affects people of color and students impacted by the School-to-Prison Pipeline. Ending this practice builds peace, diversity, inclusion, and justice in our campus communities.

Nevertheless, The Peace Alliance recognizes the right of university officials to conduct reasonable due diligence at a later stage of the process.

Working with the Inside Out Coalition (EIO), we are empowering students to advocate for the REAL (Restoring Education and Learning) Act that would remove barriers for currently incarcerated people trying to access Pell Grants for academic study. Through this campaign, SPA has garnered more than 2,000 new members of the network and the petition we created generated thousands of letters to Members of Congress. We have also established a relationship with Brave New Films, which hopes to produce a video on access to education for people impacted by the justice system. This is meaningful since their social media network consists of over half a million followers, and they already have tremendously increased the visibility of our campaigns.

Finally, we have been working to cultivate future collaborations with organizations such as ACLU, NELP, and PICO Network, along with the Center for American Progress, to encourage larger scale support for Abolish the Box and other related initiatives.

Legislative and International Progress

During the closing days of the 113th Congress, we helped to ensure final passage of the Deaths in Custody Reporting Act by convincing a Senator to remove his hold. Since the end of last session, we have been actively laying groundwork for the 114th Congress on a range of priorities. So far this year, our network has generated over 30,000 messages to Congress on important peacebuilding policy priorities.

As a measure of the respect we have earned on the Hill, we were invited by Rep. Bobby Scott's (VA-3) office to consult on the re-write of the Youth PROMISE Act. Consequently, we were able to secure legislative language that specifically names Restorative Justice-based programs as one of the community options worthy of funding. This will make the bill more likely to gain significant bipartisan support and ultimately aid in passage.

We generated nearly 4,000 messages on behalf of Rep. Tim Ryan's (OH-13) bill to amend the Elementary and Secondary Education Act to include Social and Emotional Learning in school curricula (HR 850). These messages reached 448 of the 535 Members and Senators. Additionally, we very quickly mobilized to generate calls in support of Rep. Steve Cohen's (TN-9) successful Amendment to include Restorative Justice in the Student Success Act, though the larger bill ultimately failed. Finally, when called into action again at the last minute, our grassroots generated messages and calls in support of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act funding after it was stripped out of the House Commerce, Justice and Science Appropriations (JJDPA) Bill. Advocacy does take perseverance and while funding was not restored in the House, the Senate has included strong JJDPA funding in their version, and the Senate version is expected to ultimately become law.

Youth PROMISE Act

We continue to actively advocate for this important alternative to juvenile incarceration. The bill has been introduced as HR 2197 in the House. Working with Rep. Bobby Scott, we are following a modified strategy this session. We have a four-member Lead Sponsorship team rather than just two.

In the House, the team is composed of Reps. Scott, Walter Jones (NC-3), Tony Cardenas (CA-29), and Trey Gowdy (SC-4). In the Senate, the bill was just introduced as S 1770. Following the House approach, a four Senator Lead Sponsorship team consists of Sens. James Inhofe (OK), Bob Casey (PA), David Vitter (LA), and Mike Phillips (MI).

Department of Peacebuilding

The Department of Peacebuilding Act of 2015 was re-introduced as H.R. 1111 on February 26, 2015 by Rep. Barbara Lee (CA-13) with input from TPA's National Grassroots Department of Peacebuilding (DoP) Committee and other DoP supporters.

The DoP Committee coordinates with Rep. Lee's office in a continuing effort, generating thousands of phone calls, emails, and letters from around the country, many of the latter hand-delivered on the Hill. During this year's Season for Nonviolence, efforts were initiated to secure 25 co-sponsors (and counting). The DoP Committee and CA supporters are following up on endorsement by the CA statewide Democratic Party (CDP) of DoP 2013, and, to date, the CDP Veterans Caucus and CDP organizations from throughout CA support DoP 2015. As part of its campaign to generate additional support, the Committee is continuing to obtain organizational endorsements of the bill. In addition to these lobbying efforts, Committee members have been instrumental in giving talks, tabling and participating in peacebuilding events, publishing articles and letters, organizing workshops, and hosting phone calls.

International

Our work in atrocities prevention has had some success. The State Department released its 2015 Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review (QDDR), a planning document that periodically re-evaluates the strategic vision of the State Department and USAID. Following the advice of the Prevention and Protection Working Group, of which we are an active participant, the State Department focused substantial energy on the importance of long term prevention of conflict, creating resilient and open societies, and ensuring inclusive growth. We were closely engaged with the deliberation process, and as part of PPWG, met with former Congressman Tom Perriello, the Special Representative in charge of the QDDR process and its implementation.

We were able to generate 4,649 messages to Congress on behalf of diplomatic engagement with Iran and 4,512 messages in support of funding for peacebuilding programs. As part of our support for international peacebuilding, we participated in 7 meetings with Congressional staff from the State and Foreign Operations Appropriations Subcommittees. PPWG engagement has also helped get a permanent authorization for the Atrocities Prevention Board included in the State Department Reauthorization Bill, which was recently passed out of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. If the bill passes, it will ensure that coordination of atrocities prevention will become a permanent US Government priority.

Restorative Justice

There has been much evidence regarding movement building, education, and legislative advocacy through the burgeoning field of Restorative Justice. TPA has forged a solid and growing partnership with the nation's official RJ convening body, the NACRJ (National Association of Communities and Restorative Justice). As such, we host monthly Advocacy Calls to connect representatives in the field from across the nation. These calls provide documentation and evidence as to why "RJ" is a viable solution. We have achieved notable on-the-ground victories with passage of state RJ legislation, ramped-up efforts in MA, formative meetings with MN and WA, and on-going involvement in Colorado.

The Peace Alliance's multi-media presence in the field continues to serve easy-to-access public dialogues and interviews via [Restorative Justice on The Rise](#). As well, we developed a critically needed nationwide map directory that supports easy knowledge of, and access to, RJ programs. We've gone beyond our own initiatives to promote relevant efforts of others such as #Cut50.

Over the next six months, we hope to provide Restorative Justice training sessions and, with J. Kim Wright of Evolutionary Law, produce needed panels on race, policing, and justice transformation.

Colorado Rep. Pete Lee has said, "If it weren't for TPA's work, the RJ movement and the successes that have been achieved would not be as far along."

Oprah Winfrey

Recently, we were contacted by representatives of Values Partnerships, who are working with Oprah Winfrey on an airing in October of **Belief**, a seven-night television event exploring the power of faith, cultural traditions, and connection to the world community. We know that peacebuilding and the work we do are very much related to the values and beliefs that this documentary series hopes to convey. After explaining the efforts of The Peace Alliance and its supporters, they asked us to be one of only five leaders to join with Oprah on a national conference call she was hosting to introduce this event to her extensive viewing audience.

Peace Alliance President, Bob Baskin, was able to speak with Oprah and the hundreds of people who called in about our commitment to build support for such peacebuilding Cornerstones as Empowering Community Peacebuilding, Teaching Peace in Schools, Humanizing Justice Systems, Fostering International Peace and Cultivating Personal Peace. He noted that our folks respect talking the talk, but what makes us so proud is that they also walk the walk – by taking personal and collective actions to make this a better world. Finally, he was able to announce the National Conference centered around "**Be the Movement**" that we are hosting in Washington, DC from October 16 -20. We see this as a great opportunity to associate ourselves with this unbelievably accomplished American icon. Also, we are honored that others clearly recognize and respect the work we do and our mission. It gives us great incentive to continue on this path to build a more just and peaceful world.

Closing Statement

These accomplishments would not have been possible without the generosity and trust many have conferred upon The Peace Alliance. We will continue to look for opportunities to make a difference and to inspire others to take a meaningful step for peace.

Finally, I'd like to invite you to our Conference in October. It promises to be another landmark event in the history of The Peace Alliance. Please let me know if you have any questions or suggestions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bob Baskin". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "B" at the beginning.

Bob Baskin, President