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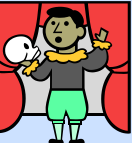
KIPCOR works in part because of generous assistance from volunteers, many of whom have now retired from their volunteering days (thanks to every one of you!). ***So we are calling all volunteers! The gift of your time or a referral to others who might help is most welcome!***



**FOOD:** KIPCOR is known for the quality of food provided during our trainings & events. ***Do you enjoy cooking and baking?*** Volunteer to help and we'll contact you to see if it would be convenient for you to provide baked goods, or perhaps a full meal (cooking duties can be shared with another volunteer).



**MAILINGS:** We have a large mailing list and our mass mailings (newsletters, for instance) need ***many hands to help*** with folding, sealing, and labeling. Volunteer and we will add your name to the contact list so you will know when we need help.



**ROLE-PLAYERS:** KIPCOR trains student mediators throughout the year, and part of that training can include rigorous role-play practice...which requires help from ***volunteer thespians***. Do you long for the stage every now and then? Volunteer and play the part of a parent fighting for more parenting time, a landlord or tenant, a consumer or business owner, or an unhappy neighbor.



**FINANCIAL SUPPORT:** We are associated with Bethel College, but ***almost entirely self-funded***. Since money does NOT grow on trees, we need to find it somewhere else. Without the generous support of friends and corporate/foundation sponsors, our work simply cannot continue.

***If you can help us in our mission of peacemaking, please contact our Office Manager, Doug Lengel, at: 316-284-5217 or [dlengel@bethelks.edu](mailto:dlengel@bethelks.edu). He will be happy to explain the volunteer process to you.***

[www.kipcor.org](http://www.kipcor.org)

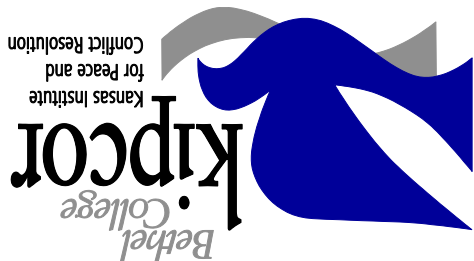


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***This may be your last issue!!***  
To ensure that you continue to receive the KIPCOR newsletter, please contact us as indicated at the top of page 6 and provide us with a valid E-Mail address.

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Spring  
2018

Restorative Kansas Conference: A Vision for Justice Realized

The inaugural Restorative Kansas Conference on restorative justice, hosted by KIPCOR, was held on April 19-20, 2018, at Bethel College. Themed "A Vision for Justice," the conference had over 100 in attendance and brought educators, law enforcement officers, corrections officers, and many others who have an interest in restorative justice to the Bethel campus. Presentations covered a range of topics including implementing restorative justice in schools, how the restorative justice movement is addressing the #metoo movement, and restorative justice in correctional facilities.



Rob Simon

Conference attendees were ushered in by the soulful drumming of Wichita restorative justice practitioner Rob Simon. The beginning of the conference included a rousing welcome from Bethel President Jon Gering. In his expression of appreciation for the confer-



Jon Gering

ence, he proclaimed that "Bethel College is an appropriate host institution for this conference," as peace and social justice are core values of the college.

Also included in the conference opening was a recognition of former KIPCOR Director, Gary Flory, who received Emeritus status from Bethel College from President Jon Gering and Dean of Academic Affairs, Bob Milliman. Flory served as KIPCOR's Director for 19 years and retired in July 2017.



Gary Flory

The opening keynote panel was comprised of restorative justice practitioners from around the country. Morris Jenkins, a criminal justice professor, called restorative justice "revolutionary":

"restorative justice is a chance for us to deal with some difficult and uncomfortable topics, like racism, sexism, and classism," he stated. Jasmyn Story, a subject matter expert on restorative practices in learning institutions, proclaimed that restorative justice is equivalent to nourishment and that "crime is the absence of nourishment."

Others on the keynote panel included Joanne Katz, a retired legal studies and criminal justice professor who came to learn about restorative justice through her association with Flory, then Director of

(continued on page 2)



Restorative Kansas Keynote Panel  
All photos in this article by Mike Gilbert

Rafe Martin leads community celebration of KIPCOR's 30th Anniversary



Rafe Martin Photo by  
Vada Snider

It hardly seems possible that KIPCOR's 30th Anniversary celebration has come to an end. It seems like yesterday – but it was actually November 13, 2016 – that the celebration began with a dinner in Memorial Hall at Bethel College, featuring a performance from storyteller extraordinaire Leroy Hershberger and music from the incomparable Arthur Marks.

And many of you, no doubt, can still hear the stirring words delivered September 12, 2017 by Pulitzer Prize winning author and newspaper columnist Leonard Pitts, Jr. Pitts treated a near-capacity crowd at Memorial Hall

with his answer to the question, *What Now? America in the Age of Trump*.

KIPCOR capped its 30th Anniversary celebration in April with a visit from children's author and master storyteller Rafe Martin. The author of more than 20 children's books, who also serves as a Zen Buddhist guide in his hometown of Rochester, NY, treated local audiences to a series of performances that were expertly-tailored to attendees of all ages.

Martin's exhausting schedule covered 3 1/2 days and included a kick-off performance at Memorial Hall at Bethel College. Martin had the crowd literally jumping out of their seats on several occasions as he talked about the creative process and extemporaneously delivered passages from a few of his books. Audience members also had a chance to view creative artwork from area elementary school students in-

spired by Martin's books. The bulk of the artwork was on display at the Kauffman Museum as part of the *Newton Kids Create: Storytelling through Art* exhibit.

Martin also appeared at a Bethel College Convocation, and performed no less than eight times at Newton-area elementary and middle schools. He also graciously gave up one of his

(continued on page 4: Happy Anniversary!)

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## Restorative KS Conference



RK Conference panel on Juvenile Justice Reform

KIPCOR, who encouraged her to think about a new way to see justice. At first glance, Katz dismissed Flory and said that law enforcement officers will call this, “hug-a-thug.” After gaining greater understanding of restorative justice, however, she mentioned that she “began to see that this is about accountability...fairness, listening, and values that we all share.”

Keynote panelist Edward Valandra, a Native Studies professor, spoke about the restorative justice movement by stating that “every great movement has a good press,” referring to Living Justice Press, a large producer of restorative justice publications. Valandra currently serves as a senior editor on the Colorizing Restorative Justice Project, an upcoming book that shares the stories of restorative justice practitioners of color and the hurdles they face.

“I don’t call this a movement yet,” keynote panelist Raj Sethuraju said. “It is still a moment. It won’t be a movement until we truly address issues of trauma, racism and sexism.” Sethuraju is a law enforcement and criminal justice professor and addresses issues of victimology, restorative justice and diversity for law enforcement officers.

The panel was moderated by Greg Paul, a professor of communication studies at Kansas State University who looks at restorative justice through the lens of language. Paul worked with co-moderator, KIPCOR director Sheryl Wilson, to craft thoughtful questions about restorative justice as a practice and as a movement.

On the second day the conference focused breakout sessions on three primary application areas of restorative justice – schools, community, and criminal justice.

## Restorative Justice in Schools

The KIPCOR Restorative Schools team organized a morning session focusing on “What’s Happening in Kansas Schools” hearing from school leaders and administrators at different stages of implementation. The session also spent time

that everyone feels welcome, district-wide implementation across the state, and an end to the “School-to-Prison Pipeline”!

Joel Friesz, a restorative justice trainer for schools in North Dakota, and Jasmyn Story, a restorative justice facilitator in schools, led a second session on “National Trends and Practices” identifying common practices emerging across the nation and highlighting areas for improvement where values and practice sometimes diverge, for example in non-teaching staff being trained and seen as key implementers for restorative practices.

Skidmore Sociology professor David Karp and human rights activist Jasmyn Story, national experts on restorative justice on college campuses, spoke in a moderated discussion during convocation at Bethel College on how the restorative justice movement is informing the #metoo and #timesup movements. The two spoke candidly about sexual violence on college campuses and universities, including personal experiences and structural needs for change. KIPCOR Director, Sheryl Wilson moderated the discussion.

In a separate breakout session, Karp and Story led a discussion on the implementation of restorative justice in student affairs on college and university campuses. Similarly modeled from K-12 implementation efforts, college campuses provide unique opportunities for restorative justice applications due to the residential nature of many colleges and the older student population.

## Restorative Justice in Communities

Edward Valandra, a Sicangu Titunwan, born and raised on the Rosebud Sioux Reservation, presented on restorative jus-

tice in Native American communities. As he began his presentation, Valandra stated that for true restorative justice to take place, American society has to recognize its “first harm,” referring to the erasure of the history of Native Americans by European settlers.

National restorative justice leader Ted Lewis and Kansas State University professor Greg Paul co-facilitated a session on the application of restorative justice in faith communities and workplaces. While many are more familiar with restorative justice in schools or the criminal justice system, the values are applicable in every sphere. More faith communities are beginning to ask what it would look like to become a Restorative Church and workplaces are recognizing the significance of a work culture based on a solid foundation of relationships which can prevent as well as repair harm when it occurs.

Mark Umbreit, an early facilitator in formalized restorative justice applications in the United States, led a session recognizing restorative justice as a trauma-informed approach and explored the role of mindfulness within restorative justice applications. Understanding the impact of trauma has quickly become an important topic in the restorative justice field.

## Restorative Justice in the Criminal Justice Sector

Raj Sethuraju, professor at Metropolitan State University and restorative justice facilitator, led a morning session on the application of restorative justice within the framework of community policing. With so much media attention in recent years on the divide and disconnect between police officers and the communities they represent, restorative justice applications provide a different lens and opportunity of considering how relationships and trust are built and where harm can be repaired in community.

Holly Chavez, Restorative Justice Coordinator for the Kansas Department of



Ada Schmidt-Tieszen, Gregory Winship, and a conference participant

Continued from page 1

## Donating to KIPCOR online is REALLY easy, and REALLY SECURE.

**STEP 1:** Go to the KIPCOR website at [www.kipcor.org](http://www.kipcor.org).

**STEP 2:** Click on “**Get Involved**” in the ribbon at the top, and then on “**Donate/Volunteer**”

**STEP 3:** Read the information on the Donate page; pay particular attention to “**Donation Instructions**”

**STEP 4:** Click on the “**Donate Online Today!**” button.

**STEP 5:** Fill out all of the information required. Near the bottom is the “**Gift Destination**” selection. The default is “Bethel College Fund (Current Fund)”, and has a downward facing arrow at the right. Click on that arrow and select “**Other**”. The “Other Gift Destination” box will appear. In that box, **type the word KIPCOR**. Fill out the rest of the form, and click on “**Submit Form**.” **That’s all there is to it!**

**STEP 6:** (Optional) If it’s not too much trouble, or if you have difficulties getting the form to accept the “KIPCOR” designation, let Doug ([dlengel@bethelks.edu](mailto:dlengel@bethelks.edu) or 316-284-5217) or Sheryl ([swilson@bethelks.edu](mailto:swilson@bethelks.edu)) in the KIPCOR office know that you’ve made an online donation so we can watch for the receipt from the development office, and give you a proper THANK YOU!!!

**Thanks for your continued support!**

## Coming this Summer: Kansas Stories of the Vietnam War

It’s been 50 years since the escalation of our country’s involvement in the Vietnam War. To commemorate this milestone, the Newton Public Library – thanks to a grant from the Kansas Humanities Council – is coordinating a summer-long series of events. KIPCOR is proud to be a co-sponsor and participant in this project.

The Kansas Stories of the Vietnam War project kicked off June 7 with a writing workshop, where veterans explored methods for documenting their war experiences.

On August 20, KIPCOR staff will facilitate a community discussion between the general public and a panel of Vietnam veterans and conscientious objectors. There is no

fee to attend the discussion, which will begin at the Newton Public Library (720 N. Oak St.) at 6:00 p.m. This should be an especially compelling discussion, given the deep divisions that existed in the Newton area during the Vietnam era.

Other events include two moderated book discussions, with the first on July 31 regarding *A Patriot After All: The Story of Chicano Vet*, by Juan Ramirez. Then on August 30, the community is invited to discuss *The Sympathizer*, by Viet Thanh Nguyen. Both book discussions begin at 7:00 p.m. at the library.

As part of the Kansas Stories of the Vietnam War project, Newton Public Library

staff will also collect oral histories from community members that reflect on their experiences as veterans, refugees, and/or those on the home front. Collected stories will be submitted to the Library of Congress’ Veterans History Project in Washington, D.C.

KIPCOR was honored to be asked to partner with the Newton Public Library and other entities on this project. We are especially looking forward to facilitating the discussion on August 20 as a way to acknowledge the strife that existed in our community during the Vietnam War, and to peacefully address the divisions that remain.

## 2018 - 2019 Film Series

Join us for the KIPCOR 2018-19 film series!

KIPCOR’s film series continues to be popular, thanks to independent, thought-provoking offerings; and post-film discussion leaders who use their expertise to shed additional light on important social issues.

The dates are set for KIPCOR’s 2018-19 film series, so grab a pen and mark these Sundays on your calendar now:

**September 9, 2018 at 3 p.m.**

**November 4, 2018 at 2 P.M.**

**February 17, 2019 at 3 p.m.**

**April 14, 2019 at 3 p.m.**

Please note the non-traditional start time for the November 4 film.

All films will be screened in Krehbiel Auditorium inside the Luyken Fine Arts Center on the Bethel College campus.

As of the publication of this newsletter, we have not yet chosen specific films to screen. However, we have many options to choose from.

What topics would you like to see on the big screen? Do you have any specific film titles you want to recommend? If so, we’d love to hear your ideas. Just call Dan at (316) 284-5829, or send him an email message at [dwassink@bethelks.edu](mailto:dwassink@bethelks.edu).

See you at the movies!

**All films shown in Krehbiel Auditorium in the Luyken Fine Arts Center.**

**Each film is followed by a 20-30 minute Q&A/Discussion period.**



**KIPCOR to Go Green and Improve Stewardship of Our Limited Resources**

With this, the Spring 2018 KIPCOR newsletter, KIPCOR has made the transition to an electronic newsletter. If we have your email address, we are sending your newsletter to you electronically instead of through the mail. This action will save resources, as we stop using so much paper and energy to print the newsletter, and it will save us money as we avoid printing and mailing costs. If you would like to re-

ceive the newsletter electronically, and you're not sure if we have your email address, contact the office at

**[KIPCOR@bethelks.edu](mailto:KIPCOR@bethelks.edu)**

or call **(316) 284-5217** and confirm that we have a current email address for you.

As we free ourselves from printing and mailing limits, we are making plans to pro-

vide more regular updates electronically so that you will know what's going on at KIPCOR. We hope that these new avenues of information about our work will allow you to participate in more of our events.

Remember, you can follow our activities on Facebook at [Facebook.com/KIPCORKs](https://www.facebook.com/KIPCORKs), and on Twitter at [KIPCORSocial](https://twitter.com/KIPCORSocial).

**KIPCOR Calendar**

More information & registration is available at [www.kipcor.org/Calendar/](http://www.kipcor.org/Calendar/)

**June 5 - 8, 2018**

[Summer Institute: Practical Skills for Managing interpersonal Conflict](#)

**8:30 am - 4:30 pm**

Kaufman House 2515 College Ave.  
North Newton KS 67117

**June 25, 2018 (and additional meeting dates)**

[Healthy Opportunities for Parenting Effectively](#)

**5:30 pm - 8:30 pm**

Kaufman House 2515 College Ave. North Newton

**August 14 - 17, 2018**

[Practical Skills for Managing Interpersonal Conflict - Health Care Emphasis](#)

**8:30 am - 4:30 pm**

Kaufman House 2515 College Ave. North Newton

**August 20, 2018**

[Vietnam War Community Discussion](#)

**6:00 pm**

Newton Public Library 720 N Oak St Newton, KS

**September 9, 2018**

[KIPCOR Film Series](#)

**3:00 pm**

Krehbiel Auditorium @ Luyken Fine Arts Center.  
North Newton, KS 67117

**September 13-14, 2018**

[Implementing Restorative Practices in KS Schools](#)

**8:45 am - 4:30 pm**

Kaufman House 2515 College Ave. North Newton

**September 24, 2018 (and additional meeting dates)**

[Healthy Opportunities for Parenting Effectively](#)

**5:30 pm - 8:30 pm**

Kaufman House 2515 College Ave. North Newton

**November 4, 2018**

[KIPCOR Film Series](#)

**2:00 pm**

Krehbiel Auditorium @ Luyken Fine Arts Center.  
North Newton, KS 67117

**December 7, 2018**

[CME/CEU Shorts](#)

**8:30 am - 4:30 pm**

Kaufman House 2515 College Ave. North Newton

**January 3-4, 2019**

[Managing Differences Within Faith Communities](#)

**9:00 am - 5:00 pm**

Kaufman House 2515 College Ave. North Newton

**January 8-18, 2019**

[Practical Skills for Managing Interpersonal Conflict \(Core Mediation\)](#)

**9:00 am - 12:00 pm**

Kaufman House 2515 College Ave.  
North Newton KS 67117

**January 21-25, 2019**

[Negotiation Theory and Practice](#)

**9:00 am - 12:00 pm**

Kaufman House 2515 College Ave. North Newton

Additionally, KIPCOR and the Community Mediation Center offer two classes for divorcing parents each month. We offer the Divorce Impact Education class the second Thursday of the month at 5:15 PM in McPherson, and we offer the same class the fourth Tuesday of the month, also at 5:15 PM, in North Newton.

Contact the Community Mediation Center at **(316) 284-5829** or [CMC@bethelks.edu](mailto:CMC@bethelks.edu) for more information on these classes.



Brandon Daurham and Akeem Soyan of Circles and Ciphers

offender dialogues and inside prisons. They brought their experiences working in these areas to enrich the conversation about transformation among those society often considers "unredeemable."

A panel discussion concluded the criminal justice track focusing on recent changes in Kansas related to Juvenile Justice Reform. Andrea Purvis, Dickinson County Attorney; Ann Zimmerman, Salina Institute for Restorative Justice; and Kelly Shand-Adams, Kansas Law Enforcement Training Center; shared about the changes from Kansas Senate Bill 367 and implications and opportunities for restorative justice within juvenile justice efforts.

Brandon Daurham and Akeem Soyan, leaders of Circles & Ciphers, presented a keynote session on Friday. Circles & Ciphers is a youth empowerment organization based in Chicago, IL, using an integration of restorative justice and the arts to build community across the city, particularly empowering youth of color as leaders in their neighborhoods. Their unique use of hip hop music and spoken word and their youth-first leadership model has inspired restorative justice practitioners across the United States. At the conference, Brandon and Akeem led participants in interactive activities they use in their restorative justice circles, including reflection on a hip hop song and group movement, as well as describing their work in Chicago.

A highlight of KIPCOR hosting this conference was the collaborative effort of the steering committee. Representatives from KIPCOR, Offender Victim Ministries,

Salina Institute for Restorative Justice, Mennonite Central Committee, Prairie Band Potawatomi Peacemakers Circle, Kansas Department of Corrections Victim Services, Kansas State University, and other individuals worked together on all aspects of coordination, content, logistics, and vision. The partnership strengthened relationships and the network of restorative justice practitioners across the state as well as planted seeds for a statewide vision of restorative justice implementation in Kansas. We look forward to the fruits of these partnerships, the conversations begun at the conference, and the future for a Restorative Kansas.

The conference ended with a beautiful spoken word piece, "A Vision for Justice," orated by Michelle Armster, Mennonite Central Committee Central States Executive Director and Restorative Kansas Conference steering committee member:

**A Vision for Justice**

*Long, long time ago  
Or was it last year  
Or was it yesterday  
A seed was planted  
A seed  
A seed was planted  
A justice tree seed  
But how will it grow  
This justice tree  
When the ground is poisoned  
With lies and broken treaties  
How will it grow  
When water spills the blood of African and  
indigenous blood  
How will it grow  
When the stories of settlers is the sun that scorches  
the earth, burns our backs and denies our tears*

**And  
We**

**Know**

*That Our stories are not the same  
And we know  
That justice is a verb*

**And WE know**

*That it is all about the babies  
Taking care of the babies  
The babies until the 7th generations  
The babies we must love  
In ourselves  
In our homes  
In our communities  
In the streets*

*Bearing witness  
Creating Brave spaces  
Learning from the past to see the future  
Sankofa  
Telling our stories*

**And  
Then  
Maybe then**

*This moment becomes a movement*

*~Michelle Armster*



Jasmyn Story and Kyla Williams



## ICPF Conference on Restorative Justice Inspires Bethel Students and Faculty

In February, KIPCOR and the Bethel College Office of Student Affairs supported five students and two faculty to attend the 2018 Intercollegiate Peace Fellowship Conference (ICPF) at Conrad Grebel University College in Kitchener, Ontario. Bethel students Anna Lubbers, Caroline Preheim, Emily Kondziola, Addie Regier and Caleb Allen traveled to Canada with Bethel faculty Lisa Jantzen Scott and Doug Siemens.

The three-day conference was a celebration of the 40th anniversary of Peace and Conflict Studies (PACS) at Conrad Grebel University College. The participants explored the meaning, history, and practice of restorative justice and included many speakers who hosted a variety of workshops and panels. The ICPF conference is an annual conference for students, planned and led by students. Students came from Mennonite colleges in Canada and the US to attend the 2018 conference.

The previous ICPF Conference was hosted at Bethel College in 2017. That was the attraction for previous ICPF attendee Emily Kondziola, a Peace and Justice Studies major: "I thought that it would be fun to attend this conference at a different college," she said. The conference provided "an aspect of my major to [enhance] the education in that sector where it might be missing in the college."

The majority of the Bethel students who attended ICPF had some knowledge of restorative justice before attending the conference and they wanted to learn more. "What stood out to me was the intentionality behind everything they [conference planners] did," Caroline said. "Before every session they [presenters] recognized that the land was stolen from Native Americans and that was very impressive to me."



Kondziola, Preheim, Regier, Lubbers, and Allen

Similarly, Addie stated that she was impacted by the emphasis placed on the indigenous roots of restorative justice. "I didn't understand how important that history was to them [conference planners]," she said.

When asked what he would take away from the conference, Caleb felt strongly that he would practice some form of restorative justice for "the rest of my life." He admits that he was introduced to restorative justice through his upbringing, but the conference helped him to affirm the importance of the values, especially after experiencing restorative justice on a col-

lege level.

Anna also felt strongly that she will look for ways to incorporate the knowledge of restorative justice she attained while at the conference. "I found that knowing about circle process and knowing what that is...is so helpful," she said. As a student majoring in education, Anna is very interested in how to implement restorative practices in K-12 schools.

Faculty ICPF attendee, Lisa Jantzen Scott, is also intrigued by the implementation of restorative practices in schools. Prior to attending the conference Lisa felt like she had a good working knowledge of restorative practices because she attended a KIPCOR training on how to implement restorative practices in schools last summer. Attending ICPF helped her get "the big picture of restorative justice," she said. The conference helped her to gain understanding about the history of restorative justice. "We [Americans] don't have the corner on the restorative justice market," she indicated, referring to the indigenous groups who have been practicing restorative justice for centuries.

According to Lisa, Doug Siemens is also eager to put his restorative justice training to use, as he also attended the Restorative Kansas Conference sponsored by KIPCOR and held at Bethel College in April.

## Happy Anniversary to us!! (continued from page 1)

evenings to speak with students in Bethel College's Children's Literature class. By all accounts, all of Martin's performances were well received; and everyone who spent time with the author and storyteller came away impressed with his welcoming presence and kind spirit. Planning



for KIPCOR's 30th Anniversary celebration began in February 2016. KIPCOR extends a heartfelt thanks to planning committee members Jeff Koller, James Lynch, Berneil Mueller, Donna Zerger, and Kirsten Zerger. The committee also received invaluable support from Beverly Buller and Carol Flickinger, who worked as liaisons to the local schools that hosted Rafe Martin and provided critical logistical support. In addition, Andi Andres of the Kauffman Museum partnered with KIPCOR as a liaison to school librarians and art teachers, and coordinated the Museum exhibit of student artwork.

We hope you were able to enjoy some or all of our 30th Anniversary events, and we look forward to your continued participation and support during the next 30 years!



Thanks to those of you who have so generously contributed to KIPCOR in response to our April fundraising appeal. With your help, and those of the other supporters, ***we are moving toward our goal of \$5,000.00*** by our fiscal year end on June 30. We know that many of you plan your giving to the college around the fiscal year, and we feel that our goal is well within reach. Thank you!!!

***If you would like to make an electronic donation, see page 7 for detailed instructions.***

## Sarah Balzer wins Bethel's 2018 C Henry Smith Peace Oration Contest ~Melanie Zuercher

### *Making peace about creation care, lifestyle changes*

Bethel College's C. Henry Smith Peace Oration contest winner has a simple suggestion: Make peace through potlucks.

Sarah Balzer, junior from Inman, Kansas, took first place in the annual event with "Environmental Inequalities in the Age of Plastics."

Balzer began her speech with a quote from "eco-poet" Craig Santos Perez, who called plastic "the perfect creation because it never dies."

"We have become so accustomed to the convenience plastic provides," Balzer said, "that we don't often think about where our trash goes after we toss it in the Dumpster."

"However, when we dig deeper, we see the immense environmental impact plastics can have, and how our overuse of plastics can be considered a form of violence."

Balzer traced the journey of a plastic water bottle thrown into the trash.

Most likely it goes into a landfill, she said, where over time the chemicals that are harmless when bonded together begin to break down and leach, as toxins, into the soil and groundwater.

People who live closest to landfills come from populations that are disproportionately low-income and/or people of color, she noted.

If the bottle doesn't go into a landfill, then it's probably in the ocean, contributing to the huge garbage mass, twice the size of Texas, accumulating in the Pacific.

The plastic garbage interferes with fishing and the livelihoods of people with little else to fall back on, Balzer pointed

out. They are responsible for killing vast numbers of marine animals, or ending up as toxins in their bodies, which again disproportionately affect the human populations who rely on these animals for food.

"By following the journey of the plastic water bottle we've tossed in the trash, we can see how, over time, the toxic substances used in plastic production can wind up on someone else's plate, negatively impacting their overall well-being," Balzer said.

"By crowning plastics as 'perfect substance' and creating a world in which throw-away culture is the norm, we have unintentionally contributed to the oppression of the poor, who are less able to combat the effects of pollution and environmental degradation."

Balzer wound up her speech by saying that, in addition to being called to prevent direct physical violence and injustice, Christians are challenged to care for creation.

"When Jesus said, 'Love your neighbor,' he did not simply mean 'Do not kill your neighbor.' Our Christian peace perspective calls us to not only to abstain from fighting, but to also to go beyond current societal norms, examining our own lives to find ways to prevent injustice and speak up for the oppressed- and combating environmental degradation is one way to do so. "We cannot begin to solve the problem unless we quit contributing to it in the first place."

While it's necessary to "educate ourselves and others about the harmful effects of plastics" and advocate for policy changes such as plastic grocery bag bans, Balzer said, perhaps most important is to "change a few of our everyday habits, taking our reusable bags to the grocery store, refusing straws at restaurants or taking the time to do the

dishes at family gatherings [and other potlucks] instead of using plastic utensils.

"Minimizing our contributions to plastic waste is one of the multitude of ways a few small changes in our everyday lives can help reduce inequality and injustice and promote *shalom* around the world."

The other prize awarded, second place, went to Victoria Riddick, freshman from Aztec, New Mexico, for a speech entitled "Finding Forgiveness in a Man I Never Knew," about her recovery from the trauma of the day her best friend was killed in a school shooting.

The Kansas Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (KIPCOR) sponsors the annual C. Henry Smith Peace Oration Contest at Bethel College.



Photo of Sarah Balzer by Phil Arensman