

## 2005 Goldin Institute Report

### *Reconciliation: Creating Effective Partnerships for Building Peace*



One need not speak Hindi, Urdu or Punjabi to sense the rivalry and at times antagonism being expressed by over 10,000 people in stadium seating on both sides of the Wagah border between India and Pakistan. It was hard to hear the local host translate the Urdu slogans of “Death to India” over the anti-Pakistan slogans being roared by the thousands of Indians around us. The crush of thousands rushing to the border for the daily ceremonial slamming of the gates between these nuclear neighbors made it difficult to keep our group of grassroots leaders together as we walked the last kilometer to the border gate.

The press and noise of the crowd didn’t abate as Goldin Institute participants from Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Tanzania, India and Pakistan joined Bhai Sahib Mohinder Singh in leading solemn prayers for peace and reconciliation from Sikh, Muslim, Christian and Hindu traditions. It was both inspiring and discomfoting to hear clear voices for peace amidst the cacophony of ill will.

Official borders are clearly not the only places where friction is manifest. The forces of globalization are increasingly making the world smaller. Daily contact with a wide variety of views, cultures, traditions, practices and beliefs is a common feature of modern life. These global forces can offer us an opportunity to be enriched by interaction with the diversity around us while increasing our appreciation for our own traditions, values and identities.

At the same time, this increase in interaction can be threatening, leading to misunderstanding, strain and too often to violence. Identities can become flattened or sharpened by the forces of assimilation and the reaction to them. It seems our growing proximity will lead both to opportunities to interact in new ways and to sobering challenges that call for new tools, skills and relationships. How can diversity be a source of strength and innovation? How can the tensions that grow from our increased diversity be abated? How can people reconcile and transform conflicts when they do arrive? How can leaders create effective partnerships for building peace?

To explore these questions, the Goldin Institute convened teams of engaged leaders from 25 cities in Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Cambodia, Columbia, Congo, Ethiopia, India, Israel, Kenya, Mexico, Pakistan, the Philippines, Spain, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Tanzania, Turkey, Uganda, the United Kingdom, Ukraine, the United States and Zimbabwe in Amritsar, India this past 1 – 7 November to focus on the theme of Reconciliation: Creating Partnerships for Building Peace.

The Goldin Institute is an annual forum started in 2002 to bring together local leaders from the emerging international Partner Cities Network to share the methodologies, tools and mutual support needed to enhance the movements for peace, justice, and sustainability in their communities. The 2005 Goldin Institute followed the tradition of previous Institute gatherings in:

- **Chicago, USA, 2002:** participants from over 20 cities learned from the experience of Chicago’s grassroots leaders and worked together to build a platform for shared learning and support through a Network of Partner Cities.

## 2005 Goldin Institute Report

### *Reconciliation: Creating Effective Partnerships for Building Peace*



- **Manresa, Spain, 2003:** teams of grassroots leaders and activists from cities explored the theme of building social cohesion in the midst of diversity, learning from each other and the nascent but growing movement to welcome and engage immigrant communities in Manresa, Catalonia and Spain.
- **Taipei, Taiwan, 2004:** teams from a variety of sectors of society from over 20 cities focused on understanding and addressing the global water crisis. Commitments to launch or enhance creative projects and initiatives engaging leaders from multiple sectors (Religion, Business, Education, Media, Science, the Arts, etc.) were shared and are now being created or enhanced in Taipei and in cities around the world.

The 2005 Goldin Institute was a powerful global forum which focused the attention of participating teams on the theme of “Reconciliation: Creating effective partnerships for peace”. In keeping with the emphasis on participation by teams from cities—rather than the individuals or organizations that inhabit them—as the principal bodies within the Partner Cities Network, the 2005 Goldin Institute encouraged a diverse set of organizers from within a city to come together to participate as a team. In this way, the Goldin Institute works to create partnerships between and within cities.

The program of the 2005 Goldin Institute was developed in consultation with leading experts and activists in India and leaders around the world. The agenda enabled all participants to:

- **share** experiences and knowledge
- **learn** from peers and fellow activists from around the world, and
- **design** innovative programs to meet the needs of their cities.

Every day the agenda offered optional morning religious observances from a variety of religious and spiritual traditions, daily presentations and discussions led by city teams focused on their work and informal times for interaction, and to visit local organizations to better understand local challenges. Through this innovative process, participants were able to:

- **Interact** with leading experts and activists working for reconciliation around the world
- **Share** best practices from their city, and learn from others
- **Participate** in workshops, lectures and presentations
- **Strategize** with colleagues from Partner Cities world-wide
- **Partner** with teams from cities around the world
- **Commit** to action, and to continued sharing of lessons learned

The week of the Institute began with an opening session where participants were welcomed by Bhai Sahib Mohinder Singh, the spiritual leader of the Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha which co-sponsored the week-long Institute. Participants were also welcomed by Dr. Balwant Singh Dhillon, Chair of the Sikh Studies department at Guru Nanak Dev University, which hosted the meetings of the participants on their campus.

## 2005 Goldin Institute Report

### *Reconciliation: Creating Effective Partnerships for Building Peace*



Participants used the afternoon getting to know each other through appreciative inquiry interviews and structured small group discussions. That evening participants joined over 300,000 persons in an inspiring celebration of the Hindu and Sikh holy day of Diwali at the Golden Temple, the holy center of the Sikh community.

The second day focused on the theme of Understanding the India-Pakistan Conflict in a Global Perspective. To begin the exploration of this theme people from both the India and Pakistan portions of the Punjab area of the Indian subcontinent presented evocative stories of their personal experiences of the partition. These reflections told stories of loss and hope, friendship and estrangement. These lived experiences of people from both sides of the border grounded the week's discussions in real life experiences; putting a human face on what is too often discussed as an abstract issue defined by borders, statistics and rhetoric.

This session was followed by an insightful lecture by esteemed Professor Surjit Singh Narang of Guru Nanak Dev University on the topic of "Understanding the India-Pakistan Conflict in a Global Perspective". This presentation provided an overview of the particular historical and social dynamics of the conflict and underscored the importance of meeting in Amritsar located near the Wagah border crossing between India and Pakistan.

That afternoon we visited Sacred Heart School where we were greeted by an overwhelming demonstration of hospitality. Highlighting the diverse student body, students and teachers at the school were a living example of interreligious and intercultural cooperation. These students and teachers challenged all participants to engage with young people and encouraged the consideration of the role of education in reconciliation efforts.

Following the visit to the Sacred Heart School we were hosted for an afternoon session at the Pingalwara Society. All participants were moved by the example of selfless service shown by the community of Pingalwara where care is given free of charge to the many young people abandoned by society, many with severe handicaps. The Pingalwara society staff were active participants throughout the week of the Institute and are models of compassion in action.

The third and fourth days of the Institute focused on the Dynamics of Peace Building Around the World. Over these two days participants on the front-lines for reconciliation in Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle-East, North and South America shared their stories, strategies, successes and struggles in their work. Participants learned of pioneering efforts and models that could be adapted for use in their home regions. Following these sessions participants gathered in group discussions to reflect on global dynamics of reconciliation efforts and to capture innovative practices that could be shared and refined.

On the evening of the third night we were hosted by Jathedar Vendati at the Golden Temple where we shared in the sacred shared meal of langar and were provided a guided tour of the Golden Temple complex. On the afternoon of the fourth day we visited the Wagah border crossing. As described in the beginning of this report, the

## 2005 Goldin Institute Report

### *Reconciliation: Creating Effective Partnerships for Building Peace*



visit to the border began with a moving prayer for peace followed by the daily border closing ceremony. Similar to the personal stories shared on the first day, this visit to the border helped to re-ground the conversations about the theory and practice of reconciliation in the current realities of tension and misunderstanding.

On the morning of the fifth day participants met in mixed small groups to discuss innovative projects and approaches that were particularly interesting from the previous days sessions. These group discussions provided an opportunity to refine these models into strategies and models for use in their home cities and regions. Then city teams met separately throughout the afternoon to develop specific strategies for promoting reconciliation in their respective regions. The evening was free for informal discussions, shopping and tourism.

The sixth day of the program offered a time for each city team to present their plan for promoting dialogue and understanding to further reconciliation efforts in their home city and region. This inspiring session was followed by an opportunity to develop cross-city partnership strategies based on shared challenges, processes, goals and aspirations.

Examples of cross-city partnerships developed during this session include:

- **Caracas, Rio de Janeiro and Chiapas:** plan to host a regional gathering of reconciliation experts and grassroots leaders to share the knowledge and tools developed at the Goldin Institute, develop a regional reconciliation strategy and to explore the creation of a regional network of Partner Cities in Latin America.
- **Jerusalem, Cape Town, Philadelphia and Sarajevo:** plan to build on relationships developed over several encounters at annual Institute gatherings to create on-going dialogue via internet communications focused on connecting youth and women's groups across cities. These interactions will be designed to lead to greater encounter and engagement as deeper relationships develop.
- **Addis Ababa, Harare, Dar es Salaam and Kitgum:** Local leaders plan to create and host an "African Summit" of Partner Cities to develop a regional strategy for reconciliation in partnership with the African Union. This regional strategy would bring teams of five leaders from each of the primary regions of Africa to meet with African Union officials and the Unity and Reconciliation Commission in Rwanda.
- **Kabul, Los Angeles, Kitgum and Chiapas:** Local leaders plan to expand the "Pathways to Peace" curriculum for college students developed in Los Angeles for use in a variety of settings. Los Angeles team leaders are also working with the MIT Laptop Program to raise the funds needed to supply partners in Kitgum with the tools and connectivity they need to further the international partnerships developed at the Institute.

During the closing session participants shared pledges with each other, describing the work that they have committed to do upon returning home. This was a powerful session of expressing personal convictions and commitments to take action. Com-

## 2005 Goldin Institute Report

### *Reconciliation: Creating Effective Partnerships for Building Peace*



mitment has become a key to the work of the Goldin Institute. We have all come to understand that it is not enough to issue statements for others in the world to act, but necessary to commit and act ourselves.

Through participant evaluations it is clear that the Goldin Institute met our goals of providing a forum for teams of grassroots leaders to:

- **understand** the underlying causes of misunderstanding, tension and violence in high-conflict areas and the dynamics of reconciliation work around the world.
- **learn** about creative and effective approaches to curb tensions and violence from leading activists from a broad range of sectors of society including religion, business, education, media, science and the arts.
- **develop** strategies to engage a variety of partners in building trust and cooperation through reconciliation in each participant's city or region.
- **partner** across cities to lead reconciliation efforts locally, and to address the underlying tensions at the global, policy and systemic levels.
- **document** and refine tools and methodologies for assisting those who wish to use the outcomes and learnings from this Institute.
- **commit** to action, with confidence that results spring from inspiration, knowledge, partnerships, and ongoing communication.

The Goldin Institute pledges to provide on-going consultative and networking support for participating cities to help them achieve their goals and to continue to host annual Goldin Institute forums. In addition to the annual gatherings, the Institute is working to achieve our mission through the following activities:

- **Regional gatherings** will be convened to focus on topics of concern to the region.
- **Institute Associates** will be engaged to develop and provide tools, trainings and facilitation skills, serving as regional "extension staff" for the Institute.
- **Consultative support** will be provided through site visits, workshops and other methods appropriate to the local context. Particular attention will be given to projects and initiatives that have grown out of Institute gatherings focused on the global water crisis, social cohesion in the midst of diversity and reconciliation efforts.
- **Documentation and recognition** of the strategies, challenges and outcomes of successful partnerships in the Partner Cities Network. The Institute will distill and describe effective strategies and offer those resources for use in other cities.
- **Interactive Website** will provide the capacity for participants to communicate and collaborate with partners in cities across the globe between Institute events.

The Goldin Institute would like to thank Bhai Sahib Mohinder Singh and the Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha for their leadership and generosity that made this Institute possible and for the gracious hospitality of the Guru Nanak Dev University for hosting our gathering.