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DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

CPACS seminar

Tuesday 10 June / 12.30 – 2.00 pm
The Conflict in Western Sahara:
A Saharawi woman speaks out
CPACS Oval Office

City of Sydney Peace Prize lecture

Wednesday 5 November / In the evening
Seymour Centre

Sydney Peace Prize Ceremony

Thursday 6 November / In the evening
Parliament House

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Comments and contributions welcome

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WORKSHOP WITH PROFESSOR JOHAN GALTUNG

by Alison Boyd, PACS MA student

On 11 April the Soka Gakkai International Australia Centre, supported by the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, the Conflict Resolution Network and the Australian Baha'i Community, hosted the workshop 'Conflict Transformation by Peaceful Means' with Professor Johan Galtung, widely known as the founder of the academic discipline of peace research. He guided the 230 participants through four sessions covering Principles of Conflict Transformation; Dialogue and Negotiation; Sensitivity to Cultural Differences; and Creative Conflict Resolution.

The workshop offered the many peace scholars, activists, managers, researchers, community workers, students, teachers and politicians the opportunity to learn about conflict transformation. According to Galtung, the term 'conflict transformation' is preferable to 'conflict resolution.' It is sensible to talk about the transformation of conflict, rather than the elimination. In transcending conflict, a mediator must deconstruct the issue and look at it from all of its aspects in an attempt to bring about positive change.

Professor Galtung explained to the participants that transformation is not an attempt to resolve and end the conflict, but rather an attempt to turn it into a positive change, reflecting a positive view of the future.

The workshop was organised in such a way that the participants, seated around different tables, became involved groups. Professor Galtung would introduce different conflict scenarios for the groups to resolve, using his principles of transcendence. One of the scenarios involved a room in which there was no space left for a wardrobe. Assuming that all furniture in the unit was indispensable, he asked the audience where the wardrobe should be placed. Many decided, as did Galtung's carpenter, that the wardrobe could be mounted on the wall. Galtung used the wardrobe example to emphasise the importance of thinking three-dimensionally in conflict resolution. He said: "There is God in each of you. Lift yourself up and see from above and there is a solution." He compared conflict to a cage. In order to escape the cage, one has

to identify it first, and then try to free oneself. This requires a lot of creativity and, as Galtung called it, "an eye for the invisible and an ear for the inaudible".

(continued on page 2)



Lynda-ann Blanchard, co-organiser of the workshop, Professor Johan Galtung and workshop rapporteurs Donna Mosford, Dagny Fosen, Valerie Ley and Alison Boyd. Copyright photo Alison Boyd

**WORKSHOP WITH PROFESSOR
JOHAN GALTUNG***(continued from page 1)*

In other words, a conflict mediator has to think beyond the obvious and put forward original solutions. As the afternoon progressed, Galtung began challenging all of us further with conflicts that have been at the foreground of the world's political arena: Israel/Palestine; USA/Afghanistan; and the events of September 11.

Professor Galtung stressed the fundamental importance of goals, whether material or spiritual, as long as they are legitimate. A participant asked, "How can the mediator make a distinction between legitimate and illegitimate goals without his/her decision being coloured by cultural bias?"

In response Professor Galtung argued that to make this distinction, we can look at the question from three different perspectives: law, human rights, or basic needs. However, all of these perspectives are biased. But in Professor Galtung's opinion the mediator, by being aware of his/her own cultural bias, as well as that of others, will be able to correct this.

Through this workshop the participants became aware that when the exploration of grievances is not anchored in honest, compassionate dialogue, outcomes that best accommodate a genuine desire for peaceful co-existence cannot be easily unearthed. In a negotiation process between two parties, Professor Galtung would engage them in a technique he calls "dreaming." It involves an attitude based on the thought, "Your today is your future". When the parties have pictured what they want of the future, it will be easier to go back to the present situation and address the problem.

The participants gained tremendous knowledge from this workshop. We applaud Professor Galtung and his efforts and worldly contributions to peace mediating!

CPACS would like to thank SGI Australia for their generous donation of the workshop proceeds.

The workshop with Professor Galtung is described in more detail in a report available from CPACS. For more information contact CPACS Publications Officer Iris Wielders on (02) 9351 7686, iris.wielders@social.usyd.edu.au

**NON-VIOLENT
RESPONSES TO
WAR**

by Stuart Rees, CPACS Director, Ken Macnab, CPACS President and Wendy Lambourne, Lecturer

Over the past months, world affairs have been dominated by the war on Iraq. CPACS staff and members were involved in the protests against the war and provided commentary on radio, television and in newspapers. The Centre also held a brainstorming session on non-violent alternatives to war. From this discussion, some important elements emerged as part of a non-violent response to not only the war in Iraq but to war in general: even-handedness in media reporting; support for the role of the United Nations; and an agenda for dialogue. These elements are based on the observations that Albert Einstein and Mahatma Gandhi, two famous supporters of non-violence, might have made about the war in Iraq.

Albert Einstein warned that militarism - a policy that power be maintained by armed forces - destroyed the democratic spirit of a nation and the dignity of individuals. To challenge militarism is to insist on dialogue to achieve respect, understanding and common humanitarian goals. Such dialogue also contributes to the spirit of a non-violent and inclusive democracy. Mahatma Gandhi objected to violence because, he said, even when violence appeared to do good, the evil it did was permanent. Gandhian perspectives on non-violence emphasise a search for truth to reveal people's real interests and needs. In times of war such a search would require even-handedness in reporting and even-handedness in treating prisoners of war. There should be no double standards.

Three ways forward towards a non-violent future**1. Even-handedness in media reporting**

It is imperative to insist on even-handedness in the media, and a genuinely critical level of reporting and

commentary. The use of euphemisms that conceal more than they reveal, such as 'collateral damage', 'friendly fire', 'regime change' and the 'war on terrorism' should be avoided. Even-handed media reporting of conflict and violence involves the use of terminology that does not sanitise, justify or promote conflict and violence. Media fascination with the attributes of guided missiles, the power of bombs, the technology and armour of tanks and the killing capabilities of unseen aircraft needs to be balanced by consideration of the devastation of bombing and the costs of such destruction. Even-handed reporting involves exposure of the hypocrisy and double standards rampant in politics and international relations, where others are condemned or attacked for having the same weapons as their attackers. It would involve awareness and avoidance of racism, prejudice, bigotry and intolerance.

2. Support for the role of the United Nations

In the period before this war, treatment of the United Nations by the American and Australian governments was at times dismissive, destructive and hypocritical. They disparaged, voted against or refused to participate in important initiatives such as the addition of a protocol to the Convention against Torture permitting the inspection of places of detention (Australia was sensitive about its treatment of refugees) and the implementation of the International Criminal Court (America was determined not to permit its military personnel to appear before any such body). The Bush Administration's approach to the United Nations Security Council was to attempt to bluff, bully and bribe its members into endorsing the American view of the need for war against Iraq, and to charge the UN with failure and irrelevance if and when it did not comply. Both approaches demean the United Nations. Moreover, both obscure the point that in many ways the UN handled the recent crisis on its merits, and its response was right and proper.

Several points should be made, loudly and clearly, about the United Nations. Its Charter, Declaration of Human Rights and activities in a wide range of areas,

including more than 30 peacekeeping missions around the world, represent both the best enunciation of humanitarian aspirations yet achieved, and the most praiseworthy attempt at their international implementation in existence. The UN is far from perfect - possibly in some areas quite far from it - but it is by far the best organisation available. It deserves our strongest support. Moreover, the United Nations should coordinate the post-war reconstruction of Iraq in order to ensure that peace is not just the end of violence, but a peace with justice, inclusive democracy and respect for human rights.

3. An Agenda for dialogue

Dialogue for peace is based on a sovereignty of values, as expressed by a commitment to non-violence, a respect for human rights, promotion of plans for worldwide disarmament and a determination to bolster the resources of the United Nations. These values include even-handedness, generosity and respect in the treatment of people. This should apply in the conduct of war, particularly in the treatment of prisoners, civilians, and the wounded. It should apply at home, in schools and universities, in the workplace, on the playing field, in politics and international forums. It should apply to all issues of contention, such as treatment of indigenous peoples, the elderly, the handicapped, and the unemployed. Such even-handedness, generosity and respect would lay the foundations for universal non-violence.

There are several locations in which Australians could contribute to such dialogue. (1) Within Australia with citizens and with media representatives who continue to believe that this was a just war and that the American military can achieve security. Dialogue also needs to occur with Australian Muslims who might believe that Australia supports a war against Islam. (2) With Iraqis in Australia and in Iraq. In any agenda for peace with justice, consultation with the people most affected has to be a priority. Including the Iraqi peoples in Australia intends to give them a voice and to allow them to take ownership of the process. (3) In different parts of South East Asia where moderate leaders of governments and of NGOs have been appealing for

dialogue to promote cooperation for peace. (4) With citizens of the United States who share the perspective that violence is counter-productive and that the peaceful reconstruction of Iraq needs to be managed by the Iraqi people under the auspices of the United Nations.

Dialogue must cross ethnic and cultural boundaries, differences in age and gender, religious and political boundaries, local and national interests. Such dialogue is essential in the handling of problems that ignore all boundaries, such as AIDS and the new Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome. Without dialogue for peace and non-violence by everyone, we face an increasingly difficult future and reduce our chances of shaping our own destinies. In all walks of life, at the highest levels of diplomacy and in personal communication with ordinary citizens, dialogue about the means and ends of non-violence can contribute to understanding and trust and thereby build peace with justice. None of this is unrealistic. It should not be dismissed as utopian. But it does require commitment and application. The objective should be to make peace and non-violence as central to our world as war and violence have been.

News from CPACS

New South Wales Human Rights Education Committee *by Lynda-ann Blanchard, CPACS Council Member*

A number of CPACS members have become active participants in the New South Wales Human Rights Education Committee (NSWHREC). CPACS Council members Peggy and Laurie Craddock have been involved in approaching primary school principals to become engaged in activities associated with the Citizenship for Humanity Project. This project is based on the idea of partnership and mobilisation of school students and teachers keen to promote human rights education in NSW.

The project will particularly encourage final year primary school students to engage in human rights education activities. Certificates of Humanity will

be awarded in recognition of student participation and their school's affirmation of human rights values. CPACS Council member Jane Sloane has offered to liaise with the Sydney Peace Foundation regarding initiatives for promoting peace education in NSW schools. More information can be found on the website <http://www.nswhrec.freeservers.com>

Aboriginal Community Patrols
by Lynda-ann Blanchard, CPACS Council Member

After a successful pilot program involving four regional communities, which was undertaken as a joint research project between CPACS, the Koori Centre and the NSW Attorney General's Department between 1999 and 2001, the Government has announced substantial funding to support 10 patrols across NSW for up to four years. Aboriginal Community Patrols involve the coordination of volunteers and workers who patrol the community, providing a protective presence and, more specifically, an alternative dispute resolution mechanism for young people 'at risk'. Patrol workers often respond to situations that might otherwise attract a police response.

Conflict Resolution Desk
by Tim Marchant, Coordinator Conflict Resolution Desk

The first activity of the new Conflict Resolution Desk (CRD), a twelve-week study group on conflict resolution skills, was concluded at the end of April. This study group was composed of CPACS members, CPACS staff and NSW Human Rights Education Committee members and facilitated by Lynette Simons with the support of Stella Cornelius. The evaluations were extremely positive and we look forward to organising similar groups in the future. At the last meeting a discussion was held about the possibilities that exist for the CRD.

Following from this discussion, we are currently mapping out the work of the CRD for the rest of the year. A first step in the plan is the development of a brochure and

web page explaining the conflict resolution services that CPACS is able to offer. It is our intention to publicise the capacity of the CRD in the upcoming months and to hold a series of strategic meetings to ensure that people in a variety of sectors, not least in the university itself, are aware of the skills that the CRD can provide.

For more information, please contact Tim Marchant on Mondays at 9351 3453, crdcpacs@arts.usyd.edu.au

New publication

by Stuart Rees, CPACS Director

Passion for Peace, the new book by Professor Stuart Rees published by UNSW Press, is due to come out in October this year.

The book examines the contribution that the respect for human rights and the practice of non-violence make to the building of peace with justice in any culture or country. The arguments are peppered with poems and with examples of personal experience, hence the reference to 'passion'.

RECONCILIATION IN PRACTICE: STORIES FROM LEBANON, THE SOLOMON ISLANDS AND SOUTH AFRICA

by Synneva Zempel, PACS MA student

On Monday, April 28th, CPACS hosted a seminar on "Reconciliation in Practice" with speakers from Lebanon, the Solomon Islands and South Africa. We all read daily of civil conflicts throughout the world. The media often portrays ethnic and religious strife as ancient and intractable hatred, impossible to overcome. Lebanon, the Solomon Islands and South Africa all experienced such strife and yet, as our speakers were able to share with us, it is possible to overcome hatred. Unfortunately, the media rarely focuses on these stories.

The group from Lebanon spoke first. Assaad Shaftari was a senior officer in a Christian militia during the 15-year brutal civil war, and admitted to having

ordered and committed some terrible acts. He explained how it was that a group of people, even civilians, can be dehumanised and seen only as the enemy. When he was finally able to recognise his former enemies as fellow human beings he began working towards reconciliation, starting with a public apology to his victims. Hisham Shihab was a soldier in a Muslim militia, recruited at the age of 13. One day he recognised that an old woman he was required to shoot reminded him of his grandmother. He found himself unable to continue attacking civilians once he identified them as 'human' rather than 'enemy'. These men had participated in terrible acts against each other's communities, and yet they sat next to one another, presenting their stories, turning to each other for help in finding the right English word. Bassam Tabchouri worked towards reconciliation throughout the war. He talked about the risks and difficulties and the work of building bridges between people. Wadiaa Khouri offered a different perspective on the conflict, having been raised after the fighting had stopped. The war was officially over, but she grew up in a very sectarian society. Only later, as a graduate student did she recognise her own prejudices. She came to realise that she, like many Lebanese youth, had spent her life "internally preparing for the next war". This is what inspired her to join in the reconciliation efforts, and it reminds us all that reconciliation is a long process that does not end when the war is declared over.

From the Solomon Islands, we heard stories of transformation and reconciliation from Henry Taboni, a former Guadalcanal militia spokesman, and from Matthew Wale, a religious volunteer and leader in the process of bringing peace to the Solomon Islands. They both had stories of horrific violence. They talked about the difficulty of overcoming the anger and desire for retribution on both sides, and the almost miraculous changes that have

Sydney Peace Foundation News

by Bridget McManus, Sydney Peace Foundation Officer

New Staff

Bridget McManus joins the Sydney Peace Foundation on a part-time basis, concurrently working as a part time Events Coordinator for a small communications company. She previously spent a year working within The Malcolm Sargent Cancer Fund for Children as the Events Coordinator, responsible for the management of varied fundraising and community events to raise the Fund's profile. Prior to this, Bridget spent two years in London working within the Human Resources and Marketing functions of Antfactory, an international venture capital firm, and boo.com, the largest internet start-up in Europe. Her route home enabled travel through Europe and the Middle East. Bridget holds a Bachelor of Business in Marketing and a Graduate Certificate in Accounting and Finance.

SPF Peace Prize for Schools

The Sydney Peace Foundation is proud to announce that 2003 will see the launch of the first Sydney Peace Foundation Schools Peace Initiative. The initiative will aim to increase advocacy of peace with justice and the practice of non-violence with young people.

All high school students throughout NSW will be eligible to participate. Entry details will be available during Term 3, 2003 with all entries to be submitted by the end of Term 1, 2004.

2003 Sydney Peace Prize

The recipient of the 2003 Sydney Peace Prize will be announced in August. For more information on the Sydney Peace Foundation and its activities, please contact Bridget McManus on (02) 9352 4468, spf@arts.usyd.edu.au

Teaching

by Wendy Lambourne

Lecturer and Coordinator Graduate Peace and Conflict Studies



MA (PACS) graduates Christina Batchen, Stewart Mills, Vicky Morgan, Sally Waples, Daniel Ooi, Donna Mosford and Mauricio Perez, together with Wendy Lambourne, at their graduation on Friday 9 May 2003. Copyright photo Kristen Daghish

The seven PACS graduates pictured were amongst thirteen who qualified at the end of 2002, two with Graduate Diplomas, two with Masters degrees, and nine with Masters degrees with Merit. Scott Shanley, Mireille Widmer, Synnove Kvam and Jeremy Block had already returned to their home countries by the time of the graduation, and Carole Shaw and Bronwen Thomas were travelling overseas. A further two students, Anne Collins and Melanie Schwartz, have subsequently completed their dissertations and qualified to graduate MA (PACS) with Merit at upcoming ceremonies.

This year we have more than 40 students enrolled in our graduate program, from countries including Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Norway, Germany, Switzerland, France, New Zealand, Singapore, Indonesia, Brunei, Kenya and the US – as well as Australia! Most are Masters students, with 35 currently working on their dissertations. It is planned to include a list of students and graduates together with their dissertation topics on the CPACS website.

On 31 May, PACS students and graduates will be participating in a one-day workshop on "Skills-Building for Peace Practitioners" to be facilitated by Wendy Lambourne, Cheryl Minks, Paul Clark and Abe Quadan. The workshop is designed to help bridge the gap between theory and practice and will focus on experiential exercises and role-plays to enhance students' practical skills and understanding of conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

Three new units will be offered in the PACS graduate program starting in 2004: PACS 6908 Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding, Semester 2 (Wendy Lambourne); PACS 6909 Cultures of Violence, Semester 2 (Ken Macnab); and PACS 6910 Peace Through Tourism, Summer School (Lynda Blanchard). It is expected that CPACS will be able to start taking MPhil and PhD students from next year.

Japanese Student Workshop

by Lynda-ann Blanchard, CPACS Council Member and Lecturer

On 4 February, CPACS organised a workshop for students from Keisen University, Japan as part of their course at the Centre for English Teaching (CET). Held in the Posters for Peace Gallery, CPACS president Ken Macnab and Lynda-ann Blanchard introduced students to the work of the Centre before engaging them in an afternoon workshop exploring the language of non-violence as expressed in the pictures in the gallery.

Continuing Education

CPACS lecturers are teaching two new courses for the University of Sydney's Continuing Education program this coming winter. Cheryl Minks and Paul Clark are offering "Communication, Conflict and Relationships" over six weeks starting Saturday 14 June, and Dr Wendy Lambourne is leading four sessions on "The United Nations and the Maintenance of International Peace and Security" starting Saturday 26 July.

(continued from page 4) taken place as a result of the reconciliation process. Mr Taboni grasped Mr Wale by the arm and thanked him profusely for helping to bring about this transformation. He was so grateful that the peace workers never gave up on the process; reconciliation was a possibility the militias could not conceive of on their own.

Finally, Ginn Fourie and Letlapa Mphahlele from South Africa told their joint story. Mr Mphahlele is a former commander of the Azanian People's Liberation Army. He was responsible for ordering the bombing of the Heidelberg Tavern in 1993. Ms Fourie's only daughter was killed in that bomb blast. Ms Fourie began by talking with the audience about the meaning of forgiveness. She said that for her, forgiveness is "a principled decision to give up the justified right to revenge." She certainly had a right to feelings of vengeance over the tragic loss of her daughter. But when she sought out Mr Mphahlele and spoke to his village, it was not to accuse, but to reconcile. She asked for their forgiveness for the social problems that lead to the violence of their movement and forgave them for the attack that killed her daughter. Her gesture so moved Mr Mphahlele that they traveled together to other villages around South Africa to spread the message of charity and forgiveness.

This is only a very brief account of these deeply personal stories of transformation and commitment to peace. It is difficult to convey the impact of seeing these speakers, from opposite sides of violent conflicts, standing together with

remarkable ease and presenting their stories as shared experiences. The audience was clearly moved by these individuals and their commitment to reconciliation and peace. We can all learn from their experiences.

We must remember that participants in conflicts are human beings. Dehumanising an 'enemy' is what allows people to commit violence they could not otherwise. It also allows the media to portray violence as intractable and incomprehensible. Recognising the humanity, of not just the victims but also the perpetrators of violence, enables us to search for solutions. There is always hope. These speakers have demonstrated the incredible power of reconciliation, of charity and forgiveness, and the possibility for healing.

Note: CPACS offers a graduate unit 'Reconciliation and Conflict Transformation'.

WAR IN IRAQ: CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES

By Leona Kieran, PACS student representative to the CPACS Council

The date was March 17th just after the start of the new semester and war seemed imminent. The media were dominated by opinions, reports, polls and strategies concerning the war in Iraq. I cannot remember when an external issue, as opposed to a personal or introspective crisis, has involved my mind and heart so much. Being totally against invading Iraq – with or without UN backing – I had written letters to politicians, attended marches and rallies, talked and discussed the issues, but was now feeling powerless to prevent this war, or at least influence the Australian Government to change its mind. One always has to have hope, so I was clinging to the unlikely possibility that this war could be averted.

This was the setting for the seminar given by Dr Paul White on **War in Iraq: Causes and Consequences**.

The seminar was very well attended with approximately seventy people. It was interesting to see a sprinkling of purple ribbons among the audience; the current, personal sign of antiwar solidarity. Dr White introduced the seminar by telling us that, given a number of circumstances, the war was inevitable, and not related to the actions (or inactions) of Saddam Hussein, but to the strategic objectives of the US. He explained the geo-political context, including the end of the international security system known as bipolarity, and how there is no more bloc discipline since the collapse of the USSR. Consequently, there has been less 'order' in the international arena. More recent issues were the increased military tensions and conflict in the world, the growth in the US defence budget and the 'axis of evil' speech which had put the European nations off side. Dr White argued that the 'neo-conservatives' were now driving the White House foreign policy: 'This agenda is for nothing less than complete US world domination in the post-Cold War situation.' He contended that, 'well in advance of September 11, the US was determined to launch an attack on Iraq and topple Saddam.' The US and Europe provided Saddam with chemical and biological agents, and the beginnings of a nuclear capability. Dr White noted a list of these agents on the white board. He asserted that the overthrow of the Taliban regime and the operations against al-Qa'ida in Afghanistan resolved nothing, although a precedent was set for the US to 'go it alone'. It is now in a position to assume a more direct military presence there, and an attack on Iraq has the merit of dividing the European powers.

Dr White asserted that this enterprise is a more perilous operation than the war in Afghanistan as there is no 'Northern Alliance' and the creation of a democratic opposition is far from

assured. This was explored by giving us an overview of Iraq's history and society. The Kurdish situation was also discussed: this was interesting as it is Dr White's area of expertise. He spoke also of Saddam's cruel regime, which targets political dissidents and the country's minorities (over 16,000 cases of disappeared persons have been documented by the UN), the widespread malnutrition throughout the country and the effect of the UN sanctions.

The consequences of a war were dealt with briefly. The only possible result of a 'fight to the finish' was the utter devastation of Iraq with the country reduced to complete chaos. An attack on Iraq would give an impetus to anti-American Islamists throughout the region, bringing to the Middle East not a new era of peace and democracy, but a new and dangerous era of instability. Finally the war would create even more instability and chaos stretching to Central and South East Asia. The seminar ended with an impassioned plea from Paul that '*it is our responsibility to move heaven and earth to stop it.*'

The audience asked many interesting questions - two of them Dr White welcomed as issues he had wanted to address himself, but which he had excluded because of time restraints. The first questioned whether oil was an important motive for the US. Dr White replied that the US would have taken the oilfields in the first Gulf war if that had been its motive. He disagreed with current slogans stating 'No Blood for Oil' as he believed they trivialised the issue and obscured the grave extent of the problem of imminent war. Another query concerned the role of the neo-conservatives and enabled Dr White to point out that left wing journalists often misrepresent them as evil, which is too simplistic. They have been around for decades, but 'their viewpoint is only now meeting the needs of the US ruling class.'

Although the seminar was comprehensive, I would have been interested in comments on the difficult UN dilemma: not so much about the European response, but more on the charter of the UN to promote peace. The US appears to have little regard for the UN and its weapons inspectors, unless they support its military agenda. I feel the US government could benefit from listening to the recent words of the UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan: 'War is always a human catastrophe and we should only consider it when all possibilities for peaceful settlement have been exhausted'. I felt inspired by the passion of Dr White's presentation but he had made it clear there was little hope of averting the US invasion of Iraq.

ON THE PEACE TRAIL: HUAY PU KIEN REFUGEE CAMP ON THE THAI-BURMESE BORDER

by Carole Shaw, PACS Alumni 2002

'The refuge we all seek is protection from forces which wrench us away from the security and comfort, physical and mental which give dignity and meaning to human existence.' – Aung San Suu Kyi, delivered by her husband Dr Michael Aris at the Eighth Joyce Pearce Memorial Lecture on 19 May, 1993.

In April I was in Thailand to attend a training course and a planning meeting for the Asia Pacific Women's Watch. The Asia Pacific Women's Watch (APWW) is a formal network of non-governmental women's groups in the UN-designated Asia Pacific Region. Its major focus is the implementation and monitoring of the Beijing Platform for Action and the B+5 Outcomes Document. My Phd looks at violence against women in repatriation situations, and as there is a big push to repatriate a lot of the women along the Thai-Burmese border, I was interested in the situations in which they were living. Therefore, while in Thailand, I took the opportunity to take a couple of days to go to the border region to have a look at the situation.

There are approximately 120,000 Burmese refugees living in Thailand. Most of them live in camps along the Thai-Burmese border. Although UNHCR considers these to be prima facie refugees, to the extent that they are civilians and non-combatants, they are not recognised by Thailand as refugees because Thailand has not signed the Refugee Convention. UNHCR has a regional office in Bangkok and is allowed three field offices along the border region; however, its protection and assistance activities are restricted. The people living in the refugee camps along the border region are considered by the Thai government to be people who are temporarily displaced due to conflict and cannot own land. In essence, Burmese refugees have few (if any) of the rights offered to Thai citizens.

Many Burmese women and children have escaped from rape, sexual abuse, torture and mutilation by the military regime in Burma. Rape is condoned by the Burmese military as a 'weapon of war' against the women in the Shan State of Burma.¹ Others have escaped forced labour, conscription at gunpoint, the burning of villages and systematic beatings. They travel to Thailand in search of safety. Many who survive the long and treacherous journey across a border littered with land mines find that they are not welcome in Thailand. They are pressured to return to Burma. Some are housed in temporary camps. Others, such as those from the Shan ethnic group, have to live illegally in Thailand. Without a legal means to work, they are extremely vulnerable and susceptible to abuse. Leaving the camps is discouraged by the Thai military. NGOs that work in the camps report increasing occurrences of sexual and gender based violence by other camp members, Thai military personnel and Thai government workers. There is a heavy military presence in this area. Those who travel by road have to travel long distances along dirt tracks, through numerous military checkpoints. Access to and from refugee camps along the border is extremely restricted. Visitors are subjected to rigorous checks and controls by the Thai military at the checkpoints and bribes are essential to access refugee areas.

I visited Huay Pu Kien refugee camp, which is about 6 km from the Thai-Burmese border and is home to approximately 2,500 Karenni refugees (the Karenni are an ethnic group from Burma). This camp, along with several others along the border region, is treated as

a tourist attraction by the Thai government. It is the home to refugees from the Paduang group of the Karenni people. Many of the Paduang women wear brass rings around their necks and legs, and some wear large brass rings in their ears. It is due to these traditional practices that Huay Pu Kien, and other refugee camps where the Paduang women reside, have effectively been turned into human zoos for tourists. However, it is because of the tourists that the inhabitants of this refugee camp are less likely to be moved on, resettled or have their houses burnt down, as has been the case in many of the other refugee camps on the Thai-Burma border. The Paduang therefore have a slightly more secure temporary camp situation, but this does not come without a cost.

I arrived by boat. From the landing beach there is a steep concrete path leading to a temple at the top of the path. Along each side of this path women from the village sit weaving and selling scarves and souvenirs. The main source of water for the village is the river. The water in the river is extremely polluted. The toilets, where they exist, are pit latrines. Due to the nature of the ground and the close vicinity of the village to the river (and the number of villages along the river) seepage into the river from the latrine system is inevitable. The people bathe and wash their clothes alongside elephants that also live along the river. The area is rife with malaria and many of the residents in the camp suffer from malnutrition.

To enter the village, tourists pay a set fee that goes directly to the Thai Government. Visitors arrive at the village every 30 minutes, from dawn to dusk, seven days a week, 365 days a year. The Paduang women have little privacy and are often treated badly by tourists who throw money and have their picture taken with them. Some tourist guides will take tourists into the houses of the women without asking, many will grab the young children who wear the rings to have a pictures taken with them.

These refugees have been stripped of all their material goods, many of the women have been sexually and mentally abused and they now exist in a goldfish bowl, where their movements are watched and photographed by tourists. There is little dignity afforded to these refugee women by either the tourists or the Thai government. While I was in the camp, I spoke to a 75 year old woman who had lived in Huay Pu Kien for six years. She had made the long and

hazardous journey from Burma to Thailand with her daughter and granddaughter. She came to Thailand in order to live in a place where they did not have to fear and where her child and grandchild could grow up in a safe and secure environment. She now makes her living selling souvenirs and photographs of herself to tourists. The camps are not safe places, nor are they places without fear – they are places more like a cage than a refuge.

1. See *Licence to Rape: The Burmese military regime's use of sexual violence in the ongoing war in Shan State* (2002), Shan Women's Action Network.

ALUMNI CORNER – FORMER PACS STUDENTS REPORT ON THEIR CURRENT ACTIVITIES

I am a Project Assistant at the Human Security and Small Arms Programme, with the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue in Geneva (www.hdcentre.org). The small arms movement is trying to replicate the campaign that was so successful in banning landmines, this time targeting small arms and light weapons. The Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue is particularly trying to encourage a people-centred (or human security) approach to the issue, as opposed to the national security approach generally adopted by states. The point is to remind all decision makers that what this is about, at the end of the day, is human lives. We deal a lot with diplomats, in particular with the twelve member states of the Human Security Network, with the UN, but also of course with the NGO community.

by Mireille Widmer
PACS Alumni 2002
(See the 'On the Peace Trail' article on page 7 for another PACS Alumni report)

SEMINARS

CPACS has so far hosted eight seminars in 2003:

Tuesday 11 March

History and Politics of Disarmament
Dr Andrew Webster

Monday 17 March

War in Iraq: Causes and Consequences
Dr Paul White

Wednesday 26 March

Conflict in the DRC (former Zaire)
Archdeacon Muhindo Ise-somo

Tuesday 8 April

On Israelification: Democracy and Paranoia in International Relations Today
Dr Ghassan Hage

Monday 28 April

(Together with Initiatives for Change) Reconciliation in Practice: Post-Conflict reconciliation stories from South Africa, Lebanon and the Solomon Islands.

Tuesday 29 April

Condemned to Repeat: The Paradox of Humanitarian Action
Dr Fiona Terry

Tuesday 6 May

(Together with ACCESS, the University of Sydney Union) *Why U.S.? An Insightful Look at the 9/11 Tragedy and What Makes the United States a Target*. A free film showing and discussion with the film makers.

Friday 16 May

Gender, Politics and Islamic Fundamentalism
Faried Esack

CPACS thanks the students and other volunteers who helped with mail outs and distribution of flyers for the seminars!

Poetry for Peace

by Stuart Rees, CPACS Director

Fantastic News

In the half light of the half heard news
politicians are apologizing for violence
and when told their weapons are a sign of weakness,
men in uniform are undressing,
extremists have been diagnosed with stomach cramps caused by dogmatism
and the spring water frankness of the next bite
refers to blown off limbs of dark eyed children
being the achievement of cluster bombs
and troops dead from friendly fire have woken to say that in future they would prefer to face their enemy

at which point I rub my eyes
and increase the volume:
missiles are still the figures of speech,
a highly trained baboon with slick hair
and bombed out of syntax
is explaining that freedom means contracts for partners to re-build,
that looting the past is an untidy part of war,
limited casualties 'on our side' can be counted a victory,
water will be restored
and we should all be grateful.

Hyams Beach April 26th 2003