

## **WEDNESDAY PM WORKSHOP #5: HUMAN RIGHTS, CULTURE AND GOOD GOVERNANCE**

Wednesday June 22, 2005

Workshop # 5 "Human Rights, Culture and Good Governance"

Recorder: Isabelle Richard

### **Wilhelmina Donkoh, University of Ghana, IDRC Ghana Project**

On the topic of HIV/AIDS. Traditional rulers and health care. The right to life is the most fundamental right. Ghana has modernist traditional rulers who work within traditional institutions. In case of epidemic, they take care of information, prevention, solutions, etc. They use traditional approaches.

Example.

One ruler had in his territory the highest prevalence rate of AIDS. 30% of cases were under his jurisdiction.

Why?

Endemic poverty making people unable to access medical health.

How to remediate?

Need money

Instituted Fund to provide for the needs, the most vulnerable being women and children.

Decided to use the social network instead of institutionalization to avoid stigmatization of children who have AIDS.

Created Fund and used the money for educational needs.

Gave money to children's close relatives who take care of child and have foster parent to look for the child's interests in case the parent dies.

Focused on pregnant women be tested and treated to reduce the risk for children.

Traditional rulers decided HIV is a developmental issue.

Building contractors when given a project committed to action against HIV (posters, distributing condoms...)

Organized activities (like Fun Run, and a HIV test at the end of the Run. The Ruler was the first to be tested). Great example, helps relieve fear.

### **Ivana Dragic, Peaceful Schools Initiative, Yugoslavia Human rights and cultural sustainability**

Case of Yugoslavia/Serbia.

Historical overview

Complex influences and history

In the last 100 years

- 6 wars
- 6 changes in the name of the state
- 3 Serbian leaders assassinations
- 3 different social orders

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In the last 30 years

- civil war
- Milosevic dictatorship
- Sanctions
- Economic depression

Bombing of speaker's hometown Pancevo.

Challenges

Mentality of Serbian people (passivity, insensibility)

Flat society (no defined hierarchy nor strong elite)

Mentality of deficiency

Distrustful attitude about West

Consequences

Passive/aggressive lifestyles

Speaker moved from Architecture to Psychology

Met friends, reached empowerment, moved to activism

- 100 young people for 10 day camp on human rights and peace building. The camp was shut down by Milosevic government. They camped in secret. Resulted in more activism. On Oct 5, 2005 Milosevic government was overthrown.
- Reenactment of civil 1848 revolution (revolution in governance which resulted in great prosperity): Cultural representation of all ethnic groups and organization of a costume ball of reconciliation.

These were successful projects but more was needed.

Finished Psychology and started to work in elementary school. Found bad leadership, demoralized, passive teachers and violence amongst students.

- Got introduced to Peaceful Schools International (children want to learn, be accepted, loved and feel important) 12 teachers traveled to Canada.
- Challenge: The collaborative approach to school based decision making was a challenge. After half a year of work, a necessary but painful change of leadership finally occurred. Made people realize the importance of good leadership.
- Students were invited to attend summer peace camp in Nova Scotia. The following year brought strong leadership and vision took shape.
- New ministry of education stopped the reform. Brought discouragement
- 32 canadian students raised money to travel to Serbia and give us support. They had been inspired by the documentary "Teaching peace in a time of war". That relieved discouragement.

**Devorah Brous**

**Permaculture against human rights violations**

American and Jewish. Spent the last 12 years in Israel and Palestine as an immigrant.

Had a fresh approach on the conditions of Bedouins.

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In these 12 years, I was searching for my place in this world in the desert of Israel. It is a very humble place.

Maps of Israel don't show Bedouin communities. The Negev represents 60% of the land (size of New Jersey), it is desert land.

145 000 Bedouins live there, spread between 3 major cities. None of the villages are on the Israeli maps. The idea is to move these people away from their villages. There is military expansion happening in the middle of these three villages (projects, toxic waste incinerator...) Toxic waste incinerator creating pollution problems and higher cancer rates for everybody.

The talking happens about development (not happiness) in a very unsustainable, inequitable way.

In the Negev, people sit around the fire, it is a hospitable culture. You are invited under the tent and offered coffee.

The carpets, camels and coffee are being commercialized and exploited. The Bedouins are out rooted, displaced in a vacuum cleaner job. The information about that issue is not coming out.

Example of First Nations in Canada. The process there went a full circle. It is just beginning in Israel. Couldn't we stop it before it goes further.

Moshe Dayan, 1963: "make Bedouins urban persons"

Comparison between two communities (Omer vs Tarrabin el Sana) Development: water company, electricity company which benefits only people in the city. No electricity, water, sewage, trash pick up for the Bedouins. But they can be part of the police and the army.

In village number 3 electricity company and water company were built on confiscated land.

What happens: house demolitions, crop destruction. Bedouins are patient and resilient. What will happen to the young shepherd on the slide and his family who are dependant on their herd now that government have decided that the number of sheep must go down?

Project in Ramat Hovav

Association to raise awareness about environmental issues. The association builds infrastructure inside these villages.

Village 32 is completely surrounded by industry. The association built a medical clinic with sustainable materials. Solar energy, local doctors, revitalize traditional methods of construction, etc.

Natural building and permaculture are ways to resist. Something positive for and with the community. Was first strawbale built in Israel.

How can we work together to bring out the injustice?

Vision without action is a daydream

Action without vision is a nightmare

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Speaker's proposal: From Canadian/American background of dispossessing natives and attempt to eradicate wisdom. We need a high profile delegation. Spend time in the desert to raise awareness. What do others suggest?

### QUESTIONS

**Speaker 1:** Lived in Israel with Bedouins. In secret in the back of a restaurant, had in 1970 an illegal meeting of six people: 2 americans, speaker 1 and 3 PLO kids. One rule: no rhetoric, no bullshit but plenty of cigarettes and coffee. Real communication. Making a film doesn't work by itself. Talking makes the difference. For communication, you need cleaning off. Make people talk from both sides.

**Speaker 2:** Get help from International organization representing indigenous people. Others have the same problem.

**Speaker 3:** Survival International?

**Speaker 4:** We should take action in Canada.

**Speaker 1:** What is good here is good there. If it stays in the closet, nobody cares. Get people up and let them see what is going on. Get the kids from the schools. Don't hide the crap.

**Devorah:** Dialogue for 30 years. But is seeing enough? You need to raise awareness to get a change in policy.  
To get help from indigenous groups: Israel is a developed country and consequently doesn't qualify for help.

**Speaker 5:** Wilhelmina, could you address this question? Happy story, sad situation addressed by good governance. The problem lies with people in power. How come it is happening in Ghana?

**Wilhelmina:** Ghana is a modern state that recognizes the importance of traditional rulers. Do other countries still have traditional rulers?

**Speaker 6:** Works better on a small scale. How can we allow it to take place in other countries?

**Speaker 7:** Mohawk voice

Reality is that there are too many people. There are diseases that we created ourselves. It will continue to hit. We have to get prepared. Problems of overpopulation, USA profits. (speaking to Wilhelmina) Epidemics going to happen more and more. (speaking to Ivana) Was present at G7 in Halifax\*. Was able to address prime minister Chretien about genocide issue. (speaking to devorah) reality is people look at Canada and USA as disconnected of reality. People need to go there (Israel), but before, they need to address the problems that they have caused at home first. Then they can go with the knowledge

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needed to accompany others with the purpose of healing. When that occurs, Mohawks will sing their ceremonial song of friendship. One thing needs to be done first. (\*The question answer exchange between Chretien and Stuart Mylow is on tape and part of a pilot documentary about Mohawk and Quebec politics. Call Stuart Mylow at 514-268-1443)

**Speaker 8:** Is there escalation of violence towards Bedouins or do they just need support?

**Devorah:** Crop destruction is not actual destruction. Crops are being sprayed with toxins. 2 billions dollars are devoted to development of the Negev. We foresee escalation of violence. Traditional people are pushed into urban ghettos.

**Wilhelmina:** Suggest involvement of young Jews. Abraham wasn't he a Bedouin? Bedouin hospitality. Realize they are no different from Bedouins. They share common past. Raises the issue of education.

**Speaker 9:** Expresses recognition to the country of Bhutan. For Judeo-Christians, the knowledge of the people of Bhutan could be invaluable. We have to unite with a good mind. We are going too far in that crazy world. We have to deal with it. Everybody is involved. The same for all. We still can do it. We want people with a good mind. Power of people coming together. Lots of opposition, turbulent times but people came and had a sense of vision. They were the people coming from inside. How have they been mobilized? The voice has to be built inside the community. We need to be united. Are the Bedouins united?

**Devorah:** They are working towards it. Head of council stabbed 6 months ago. Lots of corruption. Things are intermingled with Jewish interests. Challenge with lack of transparency. People are funding these developments from Canada. Not trying to fix Bedouin problem. Ways of trying to make larger alliances. Water doesn't know boundaries.

**Ivana:** Some of the answer: peace education. The same principles apply because we are talking about humans. Raise children in peace manners because they are yet not intoxicated. It is a universal principle. It can be done even in the midst of the worst situation. School climate needs to change. If teachers sit down and decide to do it, it is possible. They need support. 2 years preparation brought great results in one particular school. It was planned to be systemized. Discouragement would have dominated without the aid of Canadians.

**Speaker 10:** To Wilhelmina: It takes sometimes luck and sensitivity, skills of compassion and communication.

To Ivana: So touching. Going through the tragedy without building too much frustration and anger. In Nova-Scotia, the rug has been pulled out under us many times. Taken the middle path of maintaining hope. Can we bring info back in a way that decision makers can understand. Tools that you could take home.