

CREATING SYSTEMS OF SOCIAL JUSTICE BEYOND THE SECONDARY SCHOOL

CONTEXT

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Abstract

The author combines the experience of teaching for twenty years at the same urban Canadian secondary school with a proven record in promoting a Social Justice agenda during that time. This study involves the exploration of Stand4Peace (S4P), an organization, co-created and facilitated by the author of the study. The author contends that participation in institutionally-based organizations dedicated to social justice initiatives informs the future praxis of those participants. Having devoted the better part of a decade to this organization, the author examines the ongoing impacts of the organization on the participants. The initiatives assumed by Stand4Peace included building shelters for children, providing aid to disaster victims and promoting issues of acceptance and diversity. The goal of this study was in part to see if these types of activities were reflected in initiatives taken on by the participants in Stand4Peace after they graduated from public school. The study utilized face-to-face recorded interviews, speaker phone recorded interviews and online surveys as data gathering devices. Ultimately, the study found that involvement in Stand4Peace inspired the activities of former members subsequent to their participation in the organization, as is evident within their own testimonies and upon examination in this study.

Keywords: Social justice, auto-catakinetic systems, ethic of care, reciprocal altruism, emergence

Creating Systems of Social Justice Beyond the Secondary School

Context

What Can We Do?

When I think back to the morning of November 23rd, 1997, I feel a disquieting sensation. It was the morning that I learned of the discovery of fourteen year-old Reena Virk's tortured body floating in the Gorge waterway, less than three hundred meters from the place I was renting. I still feel a disturbing chill ripple through my body, and the memory remains vivid, indelibly carved in my mind.

The accused, now known collectively as "The Shoreline Six," were the students and peers, the little brothers and sisters of my immediate, urban school community. How could they have become so cruelly detached from the suffering of another human being, as a bystander or as one responsible for inflicting the pain? A specter of horror loomed over our whole community. Victoria had had her dark underbelly shockingly exposed to the unrelenting gaze of the international media. I was rattled; in the interest of self-preservation, I contemplated a possible career change, or at least a change of schools. I was beginning to notice a trend at that time, towards an edgier type of student, one seemingly less connected to schools or parents, collectively running amok and apparently lacking a moral compass, seemingly drawn like predators toward the next unfortunate victim. I considered this new social environment of gangsta rap, drive-by shootings, violent assaults and kidnappings. Could a teacher be the next target? What could I do?

The murder of Reena Virk was especially sensational and garnered considerable international attention, as the perpetrators were mainly girls and the crime was particularly

vicious. Later on, I learned subsequently that I had taught the girl who washed the bloodstains from the pants of her co-accused and later convicted murderer, Warren Glowatski. I also had taught the older brother of the other convicted murderer, Kelly Ellard. The series of circumstances outlined in the synopsis are disturbingly reminiscent of those portrayed in the film, “River’s Edge” (1986): A high school slacker kills his girlfriend and shows off her dead body to their friends. However, the friends' reaction is almost as ambiguous and perplexing as the crime itself.

The behavior of the children in my community was disturbing and perplexing. They had taken the life of one girl, one of their own, and subsequently maintained a code of silence in the face of horrific cruelty. What made the bond of silence in the face of authority more powerful than compassion for Reena’s suffering and the horror of the brutality inflicted upon her? What made cruelty, and not kindness, cool and appealing to these youths? How could I help them? These questions and more prompted a need to explore ways on how to collectively move beyond the belief that compassion is weakness and kindness is costly. I decided that if I was to continue as an educator, I would have to do more than teach by rote; I would need to assume a broader role, and find ways to connect the students that I was working with to their school that would promote acceptance, compassion and cooperation. Would this be possible in a world where the most successful sociopaths are given prime-time coverage and many of the real heroes among us remain unsung? How can we teach past a world where instead of kindness being celebrated, vapid celebrities are given disproportionate media attention and sensationalized, white-collar crime goes largely unpunished, whereas a life of good works and service to others is neither promoted nor perceived as appealing?

Purpose

As a teacher, I knew it was essential to model behavior that my students could emulate. It was time to stand up for the bullied, the disadvantaged and the Lesbian, Bi-sexual, queer and transgendered or LBGQT¹, those people in our community who had somehow been marginalized. One element that all organizations can always use is money, and the best way to generate cash is fundraising.

As a musician, one of my first thoughts was to put together some type of musical event to help out a charity selected by the students in my Leadership Group², which I also coordinated. My first fundraising effort became a concert for charity, “Stand Together for Peace.” The bill featured a variety of acts including staff and student bands, and other school talent. The concert happened largely as a result of the events surrounding Reena’s murder. The staff at that time was having difficulty understanding and accepting what had happened and was looking for a positive way to deal with their feelings. The show was a big success and we presented Big Brothers and Sisters with a \$600 donation. The experience for me was gratifying and seminal and paved the path that I continue to follow today. Doing something positive in the face of tragedy and disaster made me feel less helpless against the horror and hopelessness that I was witnessing as an educator. The ability to help others not as fortunate, to lift themselves from their circumstances and to put something positive back into the world helped us all to deal with the tragedy of Reena’s loss and the lack of faith in humanity. The spring version became Perform 4 Peace, which continued as an annual event for eight consecutive years.

Background to Stand4Peace

¹ A term used to describe people who identify themselves as Lesbian, Bi-sexual, Gay, Transgendered or Queer.

² The Leadership Class is a credited course that unelected students, Grades 9-12 may select. Effectively this group has replaced our traditional Student’s Council.

By 2002, along with co-founder, Tom Gordon, we formed *Stand4Peace*, a social justice club within a local secondary school.

The group's initial mandate would be to serve as an ancillary arm of the existing Student Leadership course, which was already available to students on the course planning forms as a credited course, potentially earning the students up to four credits per year. As I created the curriculum, designed the structure of the class and taught the Leadership course, adding *Stand4Peace* to the existing mix was indeed a boon to the students, particularly those students interested in working for positive change, but not knowing where to start, and especially for those students eager to gain more service hours.

The students then and now can earn these credits from Grade 9 onwards. The idea was that, since the Student Leadership syllabus stipulates 120 hours of demonstrable service to the school and greater community within the school year, *Stand4Peace* could help the students to achieve their yearly service requirements for their Leadership class. We anticipated a strong overlap of membership between the club and the class, which later became the case, immediately after the inception of *Stand4Peace*. In fact, most students who joined *Stand4Peace* in the first few years remained members of both the extra-curricular club and the credited course for the duration of their high school years.

Due to the fact that *Stand4Peace* was an extracurricular club, membership was and always has been voluntary, but the consistency demonstrated by members of the club has traditionally been very impressive, particularly with regard to items such as meetings, fundraising and event participation, the details for some of which follows below. Though many students used the time spent attending to *Stand4Peace* business as a means to bolster their hours for their Student Leadership class, many were only members of the *Stand4Peace* club, and

received no extra credits for their participation. Over the ten year period examined in this study, a loose approximation would be a 60/40 split in favor of those who were members of both the club and the course, but we were encouraged that so many students remained less interested in earning credits and more focused on creating positive social change. The actual moment that the decision to form the group came when we were attending the 2002 BC Student Leadership Conference in Burnaby, and we heard a speech given by *Free the Children* co-founder, Marc Keilberger. He described how he and his brother Craig had formed an organization that, at that time, had already built hundreds of schools in impoverished and war-torn areas throughout the world. The presentation inspired each of us to endeavor to do more to engage with our students wanting to be more active in social justice related activities. We resolved to help those in need, be they near or far, and in as many different ways possible. Ultimately, this would manifest in a variety of ways. Amid a backdrop of bake sales, garage sales, Spectrum Idol performances and concerts, Stand4Peace would produce many noteworthy events such as “Invisible Children” film screenings to raise awareness of the desperate plight of child soldiers, “Teddy Bears 4 Malawi,” to assist refugees and victims of famine and “Someone from Canada Loves Me,” T-shirts sent to victims of Hurricane Katrina.

While we may have been somewhat naïve initially in our quest to save the world one positive action at a time, sometimes the best intentions can inflict unintended consequences. A recent example would be the Invisible Children Kony 2012 campaign, which backfired amidst accusations of being too cozy with the wrong people to further their agenda and public misdeeds by one of the group’s founders. Allegations of financial improprieties within the bureaucratic structures of the organization have also surfaced, which has reminded us to be more judicious with our selection criteria for groups with which we are affiliated.

As a result of our affiliation with the organizations *Invisible Children* and *Free the Children*, with whom we partnered in 2004-2005, we wanted to do something to help child soldiers in war-torn Sierra Leone and Uganda. We decided to embark on a *Brick-by-Brick* campaign, which raised \$7000 and ultimately resulted in the construction of a modest elementary school in Sierra Leone (Appendix B).

Other fundraising endeavors, in addition to the successful *Brick by Brick* campaign were numerous. A particularly memorable fundraising campaign that stands out in my mind was the campaign we had which resulted in the building of a youth shelter for street youth in Peru (Appendix B). We made Peruvian cookies, learned Peruvian dancing from local Peruvians in the area who shared a wonderful evening, dazzling us with their dance moves and exotic hand-crafted textiles and jewelry.

In addition to rendering assistance to children with AIDS victims throughout Africa, we had the unique opportunity to host the *World Vision Island 1500* campaign kick-off to help those afflicted children. What also made the event special was the appearance of Canadian guitarist Neil Osborne and his daughter Coral, who both performed at the event, which also featured prominent local celebrities such as newsman Hudson Mack and Victoria Mayor (at the time) Alan Lowe.

When we were informed of the plight of orphans in Malawi, *Stand4Peace* rose to action and solicited donations of teddy bears to help brighten their spirits. At that time, we were also made aware of the high costs of shipping. Sending the cash for a goat became more realistic at that point, a program that *Free the Children* runs yearly, in lieu of physical donations.

Local refugees from Sierra Leone, including a man and eventually his immediate family, also entered into our purview and we put on a benefit concert for him and his family. I am

pleased to report that presently he is well-established in the Victoria community and he himself works to support local refugee and intercultural initiatives, mainly through public speaking and the intercultural association (ICA). This gentleman is yet another example of the societal benefits that can be derived by assisting those in need both socially and economically. We fundraised and held clothing drives for economically disadvantaged youth and gave much-needed donations to the local women's shelter in our local community, *Women in Transition*.

We have donated proceeds from bake sales to the local *United Way*, but the fundraising does not always involve a sugary angle. For *World Vision's 30 Hour Famine*, we have been holding this event, which requires the participants to abstain from eating for thirty hours, ostensibly to simulate the gnawing hunger associated with famine and starvation. While I have a personal issue with the hyperbolic title of the event, the students appear to gain more perspective from their anecdotal comments that I have witnessed over the decade or so that we have conducted this event. For the future, perhaps *World Vision* might choose a better title, such as "30 Hour Fast."

Free the Children is another organization that Stand4Peace been closely involved with for more than a decade, initially giving us inspiration to form our own social justice club within the school community and also being the direct beneficiaries of much of our fundraising efforts, including the aforementioned *Brick by Brick Campaign* and School District 61's adopted village Chisamute, in rural Ecuador. As a further extension of our affiliation with *Free the Children*, this upcoming school year September 19, 2013, we will be creating the event, Spectrum We Day, a scaled-down version of the popular and powerful We Day³, the collective representation and

³ We day is an annual one day event hosted by the Free the Children organization, which features notable activists, celebrities, athletes and spiritual leaders. This event attracts thousands of people for the purposes of promoting social justice initiatives.

manifestation of *Free the Children's Me to We* movement⁴. The parent event, upon which our modest effort will be based, required a hockey arena and the likes of Bishop Desmond Tutu. Our upcoming event will, by contrast, be held in our own school gymnasium, and will feature local and school luminaries, such as activists, television and radio personalities, sporting figures, politicians, outstanding student leaders, and distinguished alumni. Stand4Peace has been affiliated with a number of different organizations, both at the local and global level dedicated to social justice. The relationship that the club has enjoyed with *Free the Children* has ultimately resulted in many cooperative initiatives between Stand4Peace and *Free the Children*. As this is being written a current member of the club is working in Kenya to build a village. Although it is impossible to avoid criticisms regarding the problems associated with large charitable organizations such as ethnocentrism and power-over situations, the positive results of the social justice activities undertaken by members of this club are equally impossible to overlook. Whenever one culture or economic group involves itself in the welfare of a different cultural or economic group issues and questions of morality will arise. The Stand4Peace club attempts to be both aware of and sensitive to these issues as we attempt to adopt the mechanisms that other organizations have found effective in making desired change.

For example, our annual *Day of Silence*, part of our anti-bullying initiative, is an event that we help coordinate, but we do so alongside the Gay Straight Alliance (GSA), who provides the posters and rainbow kerchiefs for the event. We help put up the posters and distribute the kerchiefs to volunteer participants who are then required to wear a kerchief over their mouths, in an attempt to recognize the plight of LGBTQ youths who, as a minority in our school and larger society, may not have a voice or ability to express themselves. By participating in this event, we

⁴ Me to We is a movement created by Free the Children founder Craig Keilberger, its purpose is to promote individual action in local and global social justice initiatives.

are attempting to demonstrate solidarity with these and other marginalized groups within and beyond our immediate community, as it is a North America-wide annual event.

Invisible Children is an organization that we found out about through one of *Stand4Peace*'s members, who himself had once been a refugee. Through this initial connection, we as a group devoted ourselves to educating others about and assisting the “night commuters”, children traveling long distances from their own homes to the relative safety of bus shelters, in order to escape the rebel militias building armies of child soldiers. We were interested in helping any “invisible children”⁵ in our global village. Later we wrote, produced and performed a record called *Spectrum 4 Africa*, which lyrically referenced many of the injustices occurring at that time in Africa, including the night commuters, blood diamonds and child soldiers. These subjects were brought to our attention by one exceptional young man, born in Kenya and raised in Rwanda, who told us about the “invisible children,” long before their plight or the formal organization *Invisible Children* was created. With support from the aforementioned optional Student Leadership⁶ class that I had already been running for several years as a credited course from Grades 9-12, and in the area of applied skills, we would build lasting, meaningful relationships with this young man and many other students, and continue to be involved in initiatives such as an upcoming across Canada run and a concert to raise awareness of injustice issues in Rwanda.

Today, that young man is a warrior for social justice, a person who has devoted his time and life so far to creating positive change through painting, film making and fundraising, in order to help achieve his hopes for a more just world.

⁵ Invisible Children is the term used to collectively describe those children who have either been co-opted into conflicts as child soldiers, those children escaping from being drafted by armed forces and forced into combat or those children used for other purposes to support military action.

⁶ As mentioned, Student Leadership is a sessional course offered for credit within School District 61.

Significance of this study

The organization that I co-founded and sponsored continues to flourish within our school community to bring and create opportunities for active kindnesses and constructive change. It is within this paradigm of social justice, inclusivity and egalitarianism that *Stand4Peace* has functioned.

Insofar as I know, *Stand4Peace* seems to have been an effective club if we are to measure and assess the tangible outcomes the club has achieved collectively. If we look at the successful initiatives illustrated in the above section we can get a sense of the value that these efforts have provided to our school community and beyond. The important question that remains at the core of this study then, is what, if any, are the lasting effects that can be attributed to membership in this particular club? Did membership in *Stand4Peace* and participation in its positive initiatives have any particular effects or benefits on its members? If so, then what specifically are these effects and benefits, so that they might be realized by some club or group somewhere else, attempting a similar kind of mission? Can the results of this study help anyone embarking on a similar journey? My hope is that some insight or kernel might be gleaned by those perusing the information contained herein, which might serve to offer some direction for those who may undertake similar directions. Important underlying questions of the study include: “What actions were particularly good and useful and which have provided impetus towards a pleasant,

beautiful, and good life?” and “How can an ethic of caring be developed and maintained? I would like the results of my efforts to be positive and beneficial to both my students and society as a whole. To be positive, so as to validate the continuation of the same pedagogical strategies and avoid the path to insanity, there are a number of steps I am able to take because of modern technology that previously would have been significantly more challenging. In the context of the digital age, tools exist to follow-up my work and perhaps glean whether or not my approach was successful, or to discover what parts were successful and what positive change took place and what aspects might have had a negative effect. Ultimately, the purpose of this study is to thus help other practitioners like me move towards a better understanding of the benefits derived by society, especially potential benefits clubs like Stand4Peace might provide to the downtrodden and disenfranchised members of our global community. The study examines these questions through the participation in these kinds of school-based social justice groups. Does collective action work? Is there continuity in the changes I make as an educator? Do the people who claim to seek social justice seek it beyond the walls of the institution in which I work? I want to know if my foray into the realm of social justice was successful beyond the institution of the school, outside what Ted Aoki (1998) described as the traditional black box of teaching. Did these experiences positively benefit these students to the extent that the best lessons continued in their lives?

Methodology

Research Questions

I am interested to find out the answers to several important questions after investing all of this time and effort into the extra-curricular social justice club Stand4Peace, and I am curious to find out if this club and its associated endeavors have been helpful to the self-esteem of those participants who have done the fundraising and achieved many of our collective goals. I have always been interested in asking the former members questions that I have been considering for some time:

1. Does being a member of Stand4Peace really help a person to walk the path of the greater good, for life?
2. Did involvement in Stand4Peace serve as a catalyst for positive social change for its members? If so, to what extent?
3. Did the socioeconomic position of the children who created the CD diminish or devalue the nature or integrity of their contributions? Was this merely an example of rich kids making a CD for the purposes of their own entertainment and not much beyond that?
4. How did these positive social impacts manifest in reality? Did any measurable changes take place? If so, what were they?
5. What, if any, social justice activities did the members later engage in, after high school? To what degree have the former members of Stand4Peace transformed their awareness into action, subsequent to their initial involvement?
6. What activities during their involvement in Stand4Peace stood out as being particularly meaningful?
7. Do any of the former members of Stand4Peace continue to support the causes that they did when they were originally a member?

8. Is there a positive correlation between involvement in social justice causes then and continuing support now?

9. Did the seeds we planted really grow into altruistic, benevolent behaviors?

The sampling for the study was done by analyzing my list of friends on Facebook, cross-referencing them by memory with their membership in Stand4Peace and sending them a request to join an alumni page for the group that I had set up. From there, I invited those who wished to further participate in carrying the spirit and work of the group forward to complete an online survey.

We live in an era of connectivity unprecedented in the history of the world. This fact drives modern existence, for better or worse. Logically, it is incumbent upon us to find ways to harness this connectivity for the benefit and happiness of our global family. Through the use of and access to available tools and technology such as social media, online surveying and high resolution video cameras, I embarked on a study informed by the most current literature and past accumulated wisdom available that helped me to answer some of these aforementioned questions and facilitate the gathering of as much data as possible. In order to mitigate any potential conflicts with power-over, my human data sources included only former members of the social justice group, Stand4Peace and adult current and former staff members. I posted recruitment for the study on a Stand4Peace alumni Facebook page that enabled past members to connect and update one another. In addition, I created online surveys for past members to complete and made them available for a period of six weeks for the purpose of completing this research. The following represents a mixed methods approach as demonstrated by Patton (2002). consisting of:

1. Record of events
2. Blind Surveys

3. Personal narratives

I designed a questionnaire survey as one of the components of the qualitative section of study. I selected this type of instrument because it is easy to administer, and easy for the participants to complete and through the convenience of online availability.

The Participants

I limited the participants in my study to those members of *Stand4Peace* who participated with the group from 2003-2010. Those who completed the online survey had the option to decide if they wished to participate in an audio recorded interview, to meet and have the audio of the interview recorded with an iPhone, using the voice memorandum feature, a decidedly non-obtrusive way to conduct an interview, bereft of all the cables that would normally accompany such an occasion. The addition of an option to contribute in a more extensive survey or even in a video-recorded format bolstered the limitations of the written survey by allowing a more thorough exploration of the acquired data. The inclusion of the opportunity to meet over coffee was offered to provide a more comfortable or accessible setting for the 19-26 year old demographic who represent the target participants of the study.

The Instruments

These consisted of one survey, online and the same set of questions, which were all open-ended response style.

For the interview portion of the study, the participants completed a waiver to preserve their anonymity. In an attempt to mitigate any power-over relationships during the study, I did not include any participants who continue to be students at the school in which I teach, or any participants below the legal age of consent in British Columbia. During recruitment, participants were informed that they had the option to go to my two colleagues to complete the interview

process. I informed all participants of the nature of what constitutes a power-over situation and provided informed consent materials that described the inherent safeguards that are used to prevent inducement, pressure and coercion during participation. I explained the consent and recruitment processes, the nature of the study, provided the information letter and collected the signed consent forms. My colleagues also served as the designated third-party persons whom the participants could contact for the purposes of withdrawal from participation in the study.

To bolster my ability to understand and make some sense of the data, I did some textual analysis with the Wordle web tool, software which renders textual data into randomized word clouds which accentuate the more often used words. This was helpful to understanding the data as it provided an ability to focus on the repetitive, thus important words that were chosen by both the participants of the study and the participants in the interviews. In the interests of brevity, I only examined the data this way in terms of a question-by-question model, not differentiating between interview and survey. While it would have potentially enhanced the depth of the analysis to separate the interview and survey data, allowing for the possibility of comparison and contrast, I opted to limit the scope of analysis for this section and instead focus on the comments made by all participants. In addition, I printed these word clouds, scanned them with an app on my smart device and incorporated them in to the analysis and results section of the study in the form of figures.

As an information-gathering medium, I used Survey Monkey. As Survey Monkey charges over \$200 for the Basic Yearly Plan, this route was not imminently viable for a thrifty graduate student. I was forced to copy and paste the results of my survey, painstakingly, one copy and one paste at a time. Despite the additional time and effort required to extract the data from Survey Monkey in order to avoid the functions that require a fee, the free survey tool has

proven to be invaluable insofar as I was able to collect data without the cost, inconvenience and unreliable nature of self-addressed stamped envelope administered surveys. The results I obtained using Survey Monkey were immediate, web-based and easily transferred to my word-processing program 'Pages,' which came bundled with my laptop computer, also a stalwart companion on this path to edification. While the process of transferring the data from the individual questions on the surveys was somewhat tedious, it provided the opportunity to read and re-read the responses of the participants. The tone of the responses was eminently favorable, which I found greatly encouraging. Again, an essential question that I somehow overlooked when initially embarking on this journey was to clarify the relative status of each of the participants with regard to their disposition towards, and involvement with, activities of a social justice nature. Perhaps some of these people would have continued to promote the pursuit of social justice initiatives without their involvement in the group; however, I daresay that involvement did not detract from these efforts, but rather seemed to serve to accentuate and reflect pre-existing, underlying or manifested tendencies. Many respondents fondly recollected memories from their involvement in the group and the inspiration that they derived from this association and their involvement in it. Once again, the speediness of the replies I received and willingness of the approached participants to become involved in the study reflects an overall positive impression held by the students toward their former group, its members and mentors.

As there were no consistently taken formal records, it is impossible to determine exactly the number of people who participated in *Stand4Peace (S4P)*. The number of total participants in the group during its lifespan would probably number no more than 150. So to have the kind of response I had from the twenty invitations I sent out during the recruitment phase was encouraging. Out of 20 invitations, I received 15 total replies.

It was fruitful to scour through the vaults of *S4P*; I found a treasure trove of data delights. As the data was in treeware form, I utilized a modest, inexpensive app on my smartphone called ‘Genius Scan’ to scan this treeware. From that point I created a PDF file for export of the 41-page data archive and e-mailed it to myself. From there I converted the PDF file into individual JPEGs for insertion into the body of the paper at various places for emphasis and clarification. The iPhone, once again, proved to be a very handy tool. This democratization of technology, when placed in the demanding hands of a thrifty graduate student such as myself, has been liberating for this researcher in the field and has facilitated an unobtrusive approach to my research, especially through the interview process.

I would be remiss as a researcher if I blithely ignored the inherent contradictions in a thesis driven by an interest in social justice using the devices I have described, the impact that smart phones, which I have been lauding, have had on developing nations throughout the world. In China, the Foxconn plants have appeared in recent international news headlines in the most unfavorable and unsavory terms.

Also, coltan (Essick, 2001), an essential material for the manufacture of smart devices and a material which is often brutally sourced by ruthless middlemen in pursuit of a fat bottom-line have been found in Africa. The impacts of these devices are clearly out of line with the core philosophies that drive an inclusive pluralistic praxis. This conflict between my desired intent to act in a way that promotes a socially just world is constantly warring with the realpolitik of the consumer-based society in which I conduct my research, but we all bear a measure of responsibility. While the smart device utilized for the purposes of this study and other personal, business and recreational uses is quite handy and to some, indispensable, the proliferation of these devices is not without its dark side. Sedentary lifestyles developing from too much ‘screen

time' and interfacing with these devices can be deleterious when extrapolated to large multiples of people. The social, economic and cultural impact of our recent dependent upon digital media devices on a local or global scale has yet to be adequately addressed; however, that it may be significant to the results of this study cannot be overlooked.

Sadly, I cannot proudly say that no animals were harmed in the process of this study as I cannot accurately piece the parts of the puzzle together. In an increasingly interconnected world, every consumer choice we make might result in a series of social, cultural economic and moral impacts. I do not know about specific examples of habitat destruction and degradation resulting from the pursuit of raw materials in developing nations, necessary for the construction of my personal data devices. Nor do I know of individual incidents of exploitation or tyranny exercised by the bosses of these resource extraction operations but, rest assured, in an egregious number of cases, the workers in these industries are not being fairly compensated for their efforts, nor are the widespread resource extraction methods and practices being inflicted on the earth done in a sustainable fashion. Intensive recycling measures for these smart devices to recover these essential valuable materials would seem to be a logical starting point. Penalties to corporations who demonstrably enact patterns of planned obsolescence and other detritus building future 'no-initiatives' would be a progressive step as well. There is a logical responsibility on the part of any researcher to examine the potential biases and influences that they are subjected to as a result of their place within their own cultural context. I as a researcher acknowledge that there is disfluency between the ideals expressed in the underpinnings of this thesis with the information gathering techniques commonly used in current academic circles.

The ease of which I was able to set up my for my interviews, again in an unobtrusive fashion without the accompaniment of bulky apparatus such as microphones, stands, cables and

mixers is definitely a boon to the modern data gatherer. One unified device is able to expedite so many useful tasks.

Instead of the usual interview process where those involved meet face to face, the last two interviews necessitated the use of a more primitive, yet serviceable technology: the old-fashioned telephone, equipped with a speaker phone option. While lacking the intimacy that a face-to-face interview potentially offers, the speaker phone still allows for the researcher to observe different voice inflections and other nuances such as pauses or laughter that the more sterile medium of an online survey could not provide.

As well, I was eager to hear the last participants' views on the research questions. Again, the mobile device was able to render recognizable audio for transcription with no significant problems.

The process of transcribing was also quite involved. The first step that I took was to copy the Mac MP4 files to an email, which I sent to myself as an attachment. From there, the e-mail would be opened, the attachment downloaded to the desktop and the word processing application, Pages, would be started. Using the newly downloaded file as a back-up only, I used the bundled program iTunes on the mobile digital device to play back the audio of the voice memo interview. To ensure accuracy in the transcription, I used high quality, noise-canceling headphones to minimize extraneous external sounds and distractions and achieved a precise transcription as a result. From that point, I would listen to the initial portion of the audio for 15-20 seconds before transcribing the audio content to the word processing application, Pages, on the laptop. Subsequently, I have upgraded two of my computers to Office365, utilizing functions not readily available in Pages, such as citation and comments.

Sometimes, the process of coordinating people to meet for interviews had proven to be arduous and more painstaking and time-consuming than I initially projected. There were some past members who would have been excellent participants in the study, if their previous involvement and unanimous passion for helping others could be taken as a reliable indicator. While it is true that there are some former distinguished members who are missing from this study, those who did elect to take part have contributed significantly to my understanding of the impact and legacy that such a group as Stand4Peace could potentially provide.

Indeed, the fact that upwards of fifteen members chose to participate in my study out of a total aggregate population of 150 or so in the ten year existence of the group is testament first and foremost to the character of the members, but maybe an acknowledgement of the importance to the cultural fabric of care and empathy that we have attempted to weave and interconnect with the coordinated mind, body and spirit actions of an informed, organic grassroots mind-set. While the number may appear to be low, as only ten percent participated in the survey, given that recruitment was limited to only one social media outlet and that the methods were not aggressive I suggest that it is a respectable number of respondents.

Currently, the former club, *Stand4Peace* has morphed into an actual locally-developed, school board approved course offering, *Social Justice 12* and its members now receive two legitimate senior graduate program credits. There is no longer the image of an extra-curricular club, with voluntary members, committed to social justice change and initiatives. Rather, the current image of *Social Justice 12*, might resemble one that is more organized, sleeker; a consistently populated entity with students selecting from a list of options. One of the flaws arguably inherent in tying this type of offering to credit, as opposed to offering it throughout the year, perhaps as a linear course, is the difficulty the group has sustaining the positive impact on

the school culture. To reinforce the continual relevance of what was Stand4Peace and what is now Social Justice 12, Student Leadership 9-12 has stepped in as the surrogate parent and helped sustain the influence of Social Justice 12, by participating in the initiatives that each student receiving credit for the course must create, called *Action Plans*. Leadership offers resource and manpower assistance to these endeavors, one of which *Sweaterfest*, in the spring of 2013, raised over two thousand dollars for a local consortium of charities, the Umbrella Society. Earlier in the study, I alluded to our upcoming We Day, in September 2013, and a director from this organization has been enlisted as a speaker for this event.

Due to the fact that the Social Justice 12 course was only offered in the first semester of 2012-2013, the planning for our upcoming We Day event has not been supported as thoroughly with student involvement, as many students receive their credit and move along, in contrast with the extra-curricular club, which functioned throughout the school year, through weekly meetings and voluntary participation.

In terms of the research of my general area of interest, I have been directing most of my studies towards promoting the importance of social justice and developing active communities of care, which is shown in my literature review; however, I did not merely begin to conduct this research at the inception of my graduate studies. I have been involved in these kinds of pursuits in defense of the 'little guy,' academic or otherwise, for the majority of my secondary public school career as a senior humanities teacher.

Since I began my graduate studies, I have expanded my knowledge considerably in several related areas, particularly general systems theory, of which I am perhaps most interested. I have been exposed to some incredible ideas and people and I have definitely grown throughout

the process of being involved in a more scholarly, cerebral atmosphere. After being involved for so long with the Stand4Peace group and other related extra-curricular groups such as Youth Combating Intolerance and Gay Straight Alliance, I have always been interested to know if the lessons were absorbed by the participants in those groups to the extent that they would continue to reinforce those lessons through the interactions and actions that would constitute their everyday lives. I knew the vast majority of them to be dedicated to various causes and charities.

Question by Question Graphic Comparison using Wordle

I used the online quantitative tool Wordle as a means to sift through the data I have gathered in an attempt to derive some sort of pattern or repetition from these interviews and surveys. I employed Wordle to assist me with the task of understanding the responses provided by the participants of the study, by literally drawing out any repeated words or phrases, through shape and magnitude respectively, in an effort to glean if there were any observable patterns evident. The data that I used was from those who accessed the online portion and who were interviewed, either directly, face to face or via speakerphone remotely.

Wordle enables its users to create word clouds of various shapes, colors and backgrounds. Wordle proved to be a useful quantitative tool to helping me draw some patterns out of the responses given by the participants in the study. Though Wordle itself is a quantitative tool, literally parsing through the text before generating a word cloud representing the words used with the most frequency by giving those larger magnitude, the interpretation of the results that are generated, is not, necessarily. In this case the most often used words by the participants in the study as represented by their usage to order of magnitude as represented by the respective size of the words once the Wordle has been generated. Why are certain words more prominent?

Should certain words be ignored, such as necessary parts of speech, like the conjunction? This is potentially where matters become cloudier.

It is in light of providing some understanding of how these constituent elements, the words used by the participants of the study may potentially give other researchers, or other club sponsors and teachers some better understanding of how we may gradually awaken those underlying sentiments in our students that inform these ideas that they are expressing through the words they choose to say in both their interviews and surveys. If we can begin to understand why the participants in this study have chosen to say what they have said, then we may better appreciate the whole idea and vision of what we are attempting to accomplish through such school groups as *Stand4Peace*—the continual and relentless pursuit of social justice.

Literature Review

A Need for Caring and Critical Education

The social contract is a way to reason on how we would all agree to promote the common good and realize the freedom and equality of citizens. In Rawls Minimax Theory (1971), he asserts that the maximum amount of resources should be afforded to those who have the greatest level of need. Rawls employs the idea of a hypothetical social contract for more general purposes than his predecessors. He aims to provide principles of justice that can be applied to determine both the justice of political constitutions and their laws, as well as the justice of social and economic arrangements in the distribution of educational and work opportunities, powers and positions of office, and income and wealth. Baker (2005) assesses the work of Rawls and others and concludes that we must move away from a mentalite' governed by utilitarianism and rather

“transition from the priority of utility and all that it entails-maximizing, summing advantages, ends justifying means, selective sacrifice and more, to the priority of justice and all it entails--fairness, paying taxes, avoiding paths trod by criminals, abiding by the intent of the law, maintaining the highest standards beyond the law, spreading global prosperity, and more. To meet this challenge, preparation must begin by introducing students, however briefly or intensely, to a wider universe than now characterizes the teaching of narrow, situational ethics. Leadership is the reward for those who most successfully navigate the transition to justice.”

Ultimately, as Giroux (1993) states, “pragmatism and the bottom line erase the memories and accomplishments such as Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela, Robert Kennedy, and Vaclav Havel, who speak to a higher standard of leadership” (p.48).

It is imperative that we foster this sort of leadership development to heed a call for schools of education to perform a noble public service: to educate administrators and teachers to undertake social criticism not as outsiders but as public and concerned educators who address the most pressing social and political issues of their neighborhood, community and society.

Stand4Peace has striven to selectively address specific causes where the above contract has been broken, respond according with the resources, capabilities, means and information available to us at a given time. Thus, Hurricane Katrina relief, when governments seemed to be faltering, AIDS children where United Nations were not able to stop the epidemic, child soldiers where warlords were setting the agenda and the local homeless where we have the desperate manifestations of the broken social contract shown right before us, all became within our ken and purview. Rawls (1971), Giroux (1993) and Baker (2005) all support the concept of moving resources and effort to those in need; this is theoretical underpinning of the philosophy that informs the actions of Stand4Peace.

In his examination of Socratic Humanism, Versenyi (1963) discusses the Socratic teachings on human good. This idea that all of our actions should be directed at Versenyi's painless and pleasant life and towards what is good and useful may seem difficult to envision in a world that seems to be steering towards the precipice. Climate change, petrochemical enslavement, species depletion, loss of biodiversity, financial meltdown and perpetual war do not point us to a good and useful future, rather one that is fraught with lasting pain. Clearly there is a need for people who are more willing to work consistently toward the long-term pleasure of having a planet that continues to be self-correcting as opposed to the short-term gain of consumption and financial success. As Giroux (1993) plainly states: "The money and missile sense of reality needs to be challenged through a different vision of public life, one that demands a reallocation of resources away from the killing machines of the defense industry to programs that insure that every child in this country has the opportunity for gaining access to a free and equal education", said Giroux (1993, p.18).

The purpose of promoting organizations like Stand4Peace is to promote an idea of a "good life". In the section "*Golden Rules Not Enough*" from Bertrand Russell's famous essay (1929) "*What I Believe*", he talks about evolving societies to a point where, "we can live together without devoting (our)selves to making each other miserable" (1929, p.132). With regard to social justice and the path to the good life I echo Russell's timeless sentiments where he states that "...where love is genuine, it will, if combined with intelligence, suffice to generate whatever moral rules are necessary" (1929, p. 132).

bell hooks (2003), points out that "dominator culture pointedly degrades service as a way of maintaining subordination. Those who serve tend to be regarded as "inferior and untrustworthy" (hooks, 2003, p.83). In the context of teaching at the college and university level, hooks (2003) further points out that "the absence of reward for service in the interest of building community makes it harder for individual teachers to make a commitment to serve" (p. 83).

Thus, I suggest that it is important for educational systems everywhere to address this inequity and to build in systemic reforms that could somewhat ameliorate this inherent flaw and to consciously reinforce positive, community-building actions, programs and initiatives within the system in some way, shape or form. Service to one's immediate school community is critical

for educators. This service can help us to transcend many of the issues that we collectively face as we build our community together, staff, students, parents, larger community. However, if we are to stimulate the development of ongoing auto-catakinetic systems of social justice, such as the data suggests Stand4Peace has done, we also must imbue our moment-by-moment teaching, pedagogy and praxis with the mindset and ethic of care for our students.

An Ethic of Care

According to noted business expert and motivational guru, Maxwell (2008), “People do not care how much you know until they know how much you care” (p. 7). An ethic of caring is a needs-and-response-based ethic which uses contextualized reasoning. The ethic has an emphasis on living together towards creating, maintaining and enhancing positive relations, not decision making in moments of high moral conflict or on justification. Although it may be difficult to actually determine what may constitute positive relationships the model promoted by Noddings, rejects universalizability and utilitarianism (it does not believe that there is one great good to be optimized) it is an ethic of relation, a key tenet. Nodding (1992) suggests that moral education from an ethic of caring perspective has four parts that includes Modeling: We have to show how to care in our on relations with “cared-fors.” Thus, we show students how to care by creating caring relations with them. The capacity to care may depend on adequate experience in being cared for (p. 21).

Through caring in education and associated work in the ethics of care, philosopher and educator Noddings discusses the important distinction between caring for the benefit of the student versus coercion to statistically support the presence of improved teaching methodologies. The purpose of the creation of Stand4Peace was not designed to show an improvement in teaching methodologies, rather it developed out of inspiration provided by the enthusiasm and

passion of young people to make positive social change. This is the direction that education needs to move toward in order to embrace the ethic of caring described by Nodding.

These teachers “care” in the sense that they conscientiously pursue certain goals outlined by the government in integrated resource packages uniformly delivered to all teachers, scaffolding into standardized provincially administered examinations for their students and they often work hard at coercing students to achieve those goals. These teachers must be credited with caring in the virtue sense of the word. However, these same teachers may be unable to establish relations of care and trust that transcend the boundaries of the classroom. In order to create a community of care it is necessary to care in a way that transcends a government document. Stand4Peace provided a community care for its participants and offered the educators involved the opportunity to model a genuine ethic of care in a way that would be exceptionally challenging to create following a rigid and proscribed curriculum. This is not meant to suggest in any way that teachers who focus on disseminating the curriculum to their students in the best and most creative way possible, but do not extend their relationships with the students beyond the classroom do not care. Different professionals have different strengths. In an institutional setting having linear analytical people working together with emotionally intuitive people may provide a more inclusively caring environment for a more diverse group of students. Care is expressed in many ways and if as Nodding suggests there is no one right path toward one greater good, then it is reasonable to pursue as many paths toward creating a caring and inclusive environment in which everyone may be educated together in a way that values their individual strengths, abilities and contributions to the whole school community.

In order to facilitate the development of a person in an institutional setting such as a classroom, one must sometimes go beyond the proscribed limitations of a scheduled school day

and it is my experience, that in order to be a truly effective, a teacher must engage the students not just intellectually but emotionally and socially and provide demonstrable outcomes that meet the expectations of the students involvement. Although Stand4Peace has not yet saved the world the students involved often expressed their pleasure at the successes that the organization was capable of achieving. Barab (2003) argues that what is essential for learning is for participation by each individual in the creation and functioning of his or her idiosyncratic learning experience as part of an auto-catakinetic or self-replicating and correcting system.

From allowing the students plenty of latitude to control the nature of the causes that they specifically wanted to support to giving them the reigns when it came to organizing events, meetings, events, appearances and fundraisers, as sponsors and supervisors we often just had to remind ourselves to step back and let the system run itself and be in a mode of facilitation. They did not need to be told, only asked. As part of stimulating this form of positive teacher/student/community interactions certain underlying elements become important such as the creation of a caring and trusting community, willing to give time and effort voluntarily to achieve a group goal. These elements must be present and carefully cultivated. As part of a larger concept she terms “engrossment,” Noddings (2011) describes the importance of modeling an ethic of care. As she eloquently states: “when I care, my motive energy begins to flow toward the needs and wants of the cared-for” (Noddings, 2011, p. 15).

As a self-described ‘long marcher’ in the education system, the reasons for continuing social justice work have only become more compelling, ranging from fundraising for child soldiers to promoting safe spaces for sexually marginalized students through the Gay/Straight Alliance. These are causes that engendered a sense of caring in the students participating in Stand4Peace and the teacher facilitators of the organization.

Therefore, I was keen to find out if people who were exposed to alternative ideas within our group continued to raise their own questions and continue to build community and benefit society by adopting and reflecting the ethic of care and social responsibility promoted by Stand4Peace in their everyday lives and activities outside of the institutional setting of the original organization. Although there has been a recent trend in education towards the concept of embracing a more personalized style of learning, there remains entrenched in the system a legacy of standardized high stakes testing that works directly against the concept of personalized learning and the credibility and authenticity of different ways of knowing and expressing comprehension. This fixation is indicated by the continuation of standardized exams at the grade 10 level worth 20% in English, Math and Science, Social Studies 11 at 20%, and finally, a mandatory Grade 12 English or Communications exam which accounts for a hefty 40% of the student's overall grade and is administered to every student who hopes to receive a high school diploma. Although technology has in many ways assisted educators in developing more effective teaching strategies, it has also contributed to the "intensification" (Apple, 1996) of the work load associated with the profession of educator. The demands of constant emails and electronic transmission of grades home, combined with the soft language currently employed at the ministry level regarding class size that leaves the door open for larger classes and fewer teachers, in addition to the demands created by an increasingly diverse clientele have all contributed to a working environment that has become increasingly time consuming. The result of this intensification is that it has become increasingly difficult to embrace and make adequate use of the liminal spaces that allow for the development and maintenance of organizations like Stand4Peace. There has been effort at an administrative level to make it easier to gain recognition for efforts on the part of educators to make use of the liminal spaces provided by an

educational institution, however without adequate time and internal mechanisms of support it is increasingly difficult for those teachers working in the field to incorporate an additional set of responsibilities to an increasingly daunting set of expectations. Thus, it is critical for me and other educators to not lose sight of what Socrates taught us, that those actions which promote a pleasant, beneficial way of life are those which must necessarily be practiced. Despite the assertion by hooks (2003) that “in our society all caring professions are devalued” (p. 83), we must persevere, in order to teach our students that caring really is vital to our continued species and planetary survival. We must acknowledge that continuing to distract ourselves from the imminent consequences we face as a species will only serve to exacerbate those problems and issues, whether we choose to accept them as being reality or not. In other words, caring needs to be valued. This is a form of “critical pedagogy” (McLaren, 2002) that “must become a strategic and empowering response to those historical conditions which have produced us as subjects, and to the ways we are inserted on a daily basis into the frontier of popular culture and existing structures of power” (McLaren, 2002, p. 21).

By empowering students to challenge popular assertions and dominant ways of perception, as opposed to limiting the scope and potential of their endeavors through constructs of the dominant society and accompanying paradigms, we may be able reconstruct organizations like Stand4Peace outside of an institutional setting. Though this organization was conceived within the four walls of a bricks-and-mortar school, this knowledge might be developed in a way that moves beyond the traditional understanding of these four walls and utilize modern social media to create organizations and extended communities of care that function in a more just and equitable manner. However, it is necessary to note that the creation of these communities of care should extend beyond a digital environment and involve genuine personal interaction. The move

towards depending entirely on digitally based communication is in part a factor in the commodification of social interaction and therefore has inherent risks when used as a means to develop a truly caring community of practice.

Undoubtedly there are numerous battles to be fought in the war of perception through the ‘dominator culture’ lens, the relic of colonialism and religious cultural domination of the western European cultural paradigm. In the shadow of this dominant, hegemonic paradigm, the long-term benefits that may be realized by critically informed, yet kind and selfless actions are a hard sell in this era of instant gratification and declining interpersonal patience. Moreover, there are powerful forces intent on obfuscating this sort of praxis or mindset. If we are to strive towards what Giroux (1993) describes as a “higher standard of (educational) leadership” (p. 23), then we need to begin moving away from what he cautions as “the business of leadership narrows the relationship between democracy and freedom by leading schools down the path of corporate ethics and marketplace ideology” (p. 23). There are sectors of the common interest that arguably should be shielded from these forces of profit primacy so as to guard against the path of long-term pain described above.

But as Allman (2001) points out in her section entitled, *The Ethos and Essence of Revolutionary Critical Education: An Educational Form of Critical/Revolutionary Praxis*, “unfortunately, teachers cannot bring about this transformation on their own—either for themselves or for the learners with whom they are working” (p. 173). She insists that “adopting the approach to critical education that I advocate involves a personal and professional decision to engage in the process of self-transformation” (p. 173). Allman acknowledges the importance that these transformations, “be realized jointly with others in the process of learning” (p.173), but while interaction and learning together with others is a major component to realizing the benefits

of this kind of praxis, it is really the philosophical adjustment that gets us to the next stage. Indeed, Allman states that “teachers must be willing to undergo the process of rebirth and to understand why it is necessary; however they can only complete the process within their internal relations with the students, as they too undergo the “rebirth” of becoming learner-teachers” (p.179).

In moving towards this approach to critical education or “Freirean education” as Allman (2001) calls it, one that is informed by principles of “mutual respect, humility, openness, trust and cooperation” of “inextricably linked means and ends” through “honesty and truth” we must engage in what Taylor (1992) calls “ethics of authenticity” (p. 14). If we can embody these principles, as Allman (2001) suggests, we could move towards a state of being in the educational setting in which we work in concert to “underpin openness and trust and help to engender the development of mutual respect as well as each person’s commitment to learning to ‘read’ the world critically and to the transformation of self and society” (p. 179).

Servant Leadership: A Critical Juncture for Education.

Part of our challenge as educators in the 21st Century is to actively engage desensitized, disaffected youth by actually demonstrating and modeling the types of behaviors we hope they will attempt to emulate, rather than merely having them trust in the wisdom of what we say, but removing ourselves from our own actions and what we do; otherwise, hypocrisy, cynicism and apathy could prevail.

In the course of my research, I have discovered many interesting and engaging articles, websites and ideas, but few as enlightening or stimulating as what I found on a site called *Modern Servant Leader* (<http://modernservantleader.com/>). These days the connotation of the word manifesto may suggest images of Ted Kaczynski in his backwoods bunker furiously penning his misanthropic missives at a corrupt, irreparably damaged western paradigm. Instead of blowing things up, however, Ben Lichtenwalner (2011) blows up dangerous paradigms like the cult of consumerism and commodification, with seemingly unassailable “win-win” logic. For people of all strata to achieve financial and social success in these complex times, and thus achieve success for society at large, the answer does not involve the ruthless means of aggressive social Darwinism rather the adoption of a paradigm of reciprocal altruism and an ethic of care.

Instead, Lichtenwalner, after identifying the problem of toxic leadership, and citing examples from business, institutions and government, shows effective ways to combat this alarming trend toward recalcitrant, toxic leadership. In the truncated words of the author:

“The Answer? Servant Leadership. You say good guys finish last. We say the servant leader runs a different race. The toxic leader runs a sprint. The servant leader runs a marathon... ..You seek fame and fortune, magazine covers and lime lights. We are everywhere, behind the scenes of great success – be it a Fortune 500 or a 5th grade classroom, though you have likely never heard our name. You deflect blame and steal praise. We pass along the praise and pull in the blame. We are servant leaders. Our time has come. We seek a better way and we hope you will join us. (Lichtenwalner, 2011, p.1).

Servant leadership certainly does seem to fit the notion of a pleasant life full of the good, as described by Russell (1929). Knowledge can be applied with an ethic of care and love and we need to get the most to those most in need as Rawls (1971) suggests through his Minimax principle. Widespread changes and sustainable practices need to be adopted by corporations and public institutions, holistically maintained by continual reinforcement of the goals of this approach, such as rewarding selfless behaviors and actions and embracing the tenet on a

vertically integrated hierarchy of reflected, actions, top to bottom of the organizational pecking order, especially by those with the most clout and thus, influence. Obviously power is not something one relinquishes easily or willingly, but exercises in humility by the boss can prove to be a great morale boost for the troops. Consider the popularity of the television show “Undercover Boss”.

Refreshingly, I am discovering more and more of these formerly radical ideas cropping up everywhere. Two such notable examples are the *Random Acts of Kindness Crew* from the University of Victoria and *MeToWe*, a Toronto-based arm of *Free the Children*, both Canadian organizations that aim to reflect and embody the ideals inherent in their names through public good works and actions. I believe it is vital not only to expose our students to these ideas but to model them as concrete actions performed through educators and other professionals and paraprofessionals in the educational system to promote emulation and eventually positive change. In a wider sense, this exposure and modeling of progressive and sustainable ideas and practices informed by a praxis of love and an ethic of care can only serve to unite us and work together to find helpful directions and perhaps even solutions for increasingly complex problems great and small.

Zones of Proximal Development: Student Engagement Models for the 21st C: Systemic Caring and Servant Leadership as Praxis.

There are many models of leadership that we may collectively follow in education, but it is time to begin a more rapid evolution to appreciating the big picture and start to ensure that all constituents are looked after, not merely number one:

“If leadership serves only the leader, it will fail. Ego satisfaction, financial gain, and status can all be valuable tools for a leader, but if they become the only motivations, they will

eventually destroy a leader. Only when service for a common good is the primary purpose are you truly leading” (Bethel, 1990, p.19).

I always envisioned Stand4Peace as an egalitarian kind of club. The tenets of servant leadership are those that I have sought to embrace naturally, without even being aware of the existence of the movement until fairly recently. I wanted the students to drive the club. Those who had ideas could always put them forward with the knowledge that their ideas would be thoughtfully considered and perhaps enacted by the group in the form of a project. I tried to avoid making the group about me and what I wanted to do; rather, I wanted the group to be manifested in the vision of the students. While I am comfortable being in the spotlight, I am more comfortable functioning in the background. For the students to blossom, they needed to be driving the pulse of Stand4Peace. I knew I needed to consider their development and nurture my student’s progress by modeling the role of a servant leader in a caring environment. Vygotsky said of this kind of development:

“Pedagogy must be oriented not to the yesterday, but to the tomorrow of the child’s development. Only then can it call to life in the process of education those processes of development which now lie in the zone of proximal development.”
Lev Vygotsky (1993, pp. 251-252).

Vygotsky has long advocated for the establishment of zones of proximal development, which he maintained fosters the sustainable long-term development of the child and nurture the establishment of an ongoing, auto-catakinetic system that is perpetual, once concepts are internalized by the learner.

If we are to examine the complexity of leadership in terms of what Wheatley and Frieze call “emergence”, and contextualize Vygotsky’s “Zone of Proximal Development” into the picture then we can imagine the kinds of powerful social tools that are available to be synergized for the ecological good of the system to which it is being applied or alternatively these tools

could be allowed to fall into recalcitrant entropy, ultimately for a deleterious effect on society. Eventually this evolution towards emergent, independent pods of auto-catakinetic systems of social justice could possibly resemble the kinds of effective caring communities of practice Wheatley and Frieze describe. If we all imbue our agendas with an intention of care, which extends to preparation, professionalism and all facets, exciting results for our students and society could result.

Indeed, if we are able to plant the seeds of social justice in the minds and actions of former members, the concept of ‘emergence’ becomes relevant. Though we may lack enough studies such as this one, which follows up on what those conscious of social justice ideals then are doing now, it is not to say that there are not concrete manifestations of these ideas and principles. The results may be unexpected and beyond what could be anticipated. As Corning (2002) suggests, “The synergies associated with emergence are real and measurable, even if nobody is there to observe them” (p. 11). Schools should provide caring, supportive environments and nurture the students in such a way as to promote these concepts. The opposite degeneration into the kind of recalcitrant societal entropy must be avoided as much as possible.

Indeed, one might view this as a call for those engaged in similar activities, to share their experiences and contribute to the body of knowledge on this subject.

Creating and Maintaining the Zones

A common theme that emerges from this research is the importance of contemplating a holistic awareness that transcends the self and sublimates the ego. It is, in fact ego, when left to its own selfish, myopic tendencies that can bar the path to wisdom and a richer experience, derived from being a part, playing a small but significant role in the unfolding of events around us. Perspectives beyond ego and self are vital; social justice is animated by questions such as:

“Who or what is affected by my actions?” and “By how much are they affected by my actions?” to “Do my actions benefit the collective or provide a detriment to the group?” Maybe the thoughts and actions of our students could be positively altered if effective modeling is demonstrated through these symbiotically-informed emergent caring communities of practice. Thus, the “zone of proximal development” becomes the difference between what a student can accomplish with help (from the teacher, another expert, fellow students, or from books or other aids—in short, from the human community), and what he or she can do alone without help. This zone will change potentially novel ways as teachers and students move past their present level of development towards new areas of knowledge.

Reciprocal Caring

If as Noddings suggests, a caring relation is, in its most basic form a connection or encounter between two human beings, a carer and a recipient of care, or cared-for; in order for the relation to be properly called caring both parties must contribute to it in characteristic ways (Noddings 1992, p.15). Noddings, inspired by Heidegger’s notion of care, asserts that Motivational displacement and attentiveness/engrossment are the characteristics of the care-er and Reception, Recognition and Response are the primary characteristics of the cared for. (Noddings, p. 16). As Gruenewald (2003) notes, “fundamentally significant knowledge is knowledge of the places that we inhabit; failure to know those places is to remain in a place of disturbing ignorance” (p.138). I would suggest that a group similar to Stand4Peace could use these ideas in the context of potentially determining or evaluating the direction of a social justice program.

Why Should We Be Good?

In fact, if we look to the natural world for clues as to how to properly conduct ourselves, we might be surprised to find that our behaviors when taken collectively, are shockingly selfish, predatory and ultimately destructive.

In the course of my research, I uncovered a most engaging and stimulating five-part series on the open social media video platform YouTube entitled “Why We Should Be Good” by Millar (2011).

He recounts the reciprocal altruistic tendencies of false vampire bats, who, after successful sorties sucking on blood-rich hosts, will only sometimes avail the proceeds of said booty to those hungry bats unlucky enough to have unsuccessful sorties, in the form of regurgitated num-nums. That fact alone is quite interesting, but the real interesting revelation came upon further study and the determination of those certain bats. The researchers found that only those bats who had shared their bloody booty with other hungry bats in the past, were invited by other members of the colony to partake in these seemingly altruistic examples of sharing, a practice that leans towards banishment for those members in non-compliance with this common agenda, and once again a cue for humankind to govern our cultural, interpersonal and ecological interactions. While it is true that the community of bats does damage the community of prey animals upon which they feed and their practices may not be beneficial in the interspecies sense within their community their self-altruism has proven biologically beneficial within the species itself.

Time for a minga

A short paraphrasing of a key piece from *Free the Children* founder Craig Keilberger's (2010) influential *MeToWe* story provides an effective illustration of one of the problems we

have with our social, cultural and ecological priorities. In the story volunteer workers from the organization were unable to complete an important construction project, a school for an impoverished mountain village in Ecuador, due to narrowing timelines for the volunteers return to North America, and limits to both manpower and materials. Feeling a loss of face somewhat, the departing representatives went to the leader of the village, the oldest person, a woman who listened through a translator while stirring her bubbling pot which took up most of her minimalist surroundings. When apprised of the urgency of the situation, the wise, aged woman replied, “No problem.” The representatives, fearing the woman did not really comprehend the gravity of the situation, reiterated their concerns and apologies for abandoning their mission while the woman patiently waited. After a few more moments of stirring, the woman rose from her pot, and went out to the street and shouted once, the words “Tomorrow...there will be a minga.”

Skeptical of this “solution” the disheartened representatives returned to work, to finish what they could manage. As they worked, they noticed more and more people arriving in a steady stream until, within hours there were hundreds of workers and helpers, materials and assistance until, even short of their departure, the building task was completed.

We have dozens of synonyms for money, but where is a similar concept or word in our language for a minga? Perhaps ‘barn-raising’ or ‘bee’ as in ‘quilting bee’ tread similar ground, but the link seems tenuous at best. A minga is a call to action. This little story really serves to illustrate how we have collectively downgraded the spirit of cooperation in our culture and society. I hear the old woman calling. It is time for a minga at every strata of society, to work together to face and eventually solve difficult problems. It is also time to lead by example and benefit the collective through underlying care and responsible stewardship.

In terms of proper stewardship, a consistent hand must be applied. What is needed is a more consistent notion of care demonstrated through repeated actions, not merely a one-shot effort with no follow-through. That lack of follow-up issue has often caused me to ponder how the school in Africa is doing and how the young people are faring in the youth shelter in Peru. In an effort to be better stewards and to engage in repeated actions Stand4Peace has joined with a local coalition of schools in an ongoing initiative, which has had positive results, including a student exchange, micro-credit and clean water projects through our adopted village.

In our local school district, we have ‘adopted’ a village in Ecuador, Chisamute. What this adoption effectively means, is that each of the participant schools, ours included, is expected to contribute towards the collective goals of the campaign, but also to realize our own objectives developed through an ‘Action Plan’ which is supposed to be further subdivided into individual action plans which are then manifested in ten real actions by each student, with the intention of each school contributing One Hundred Actions for the betterment of our world.

Discussion and Results

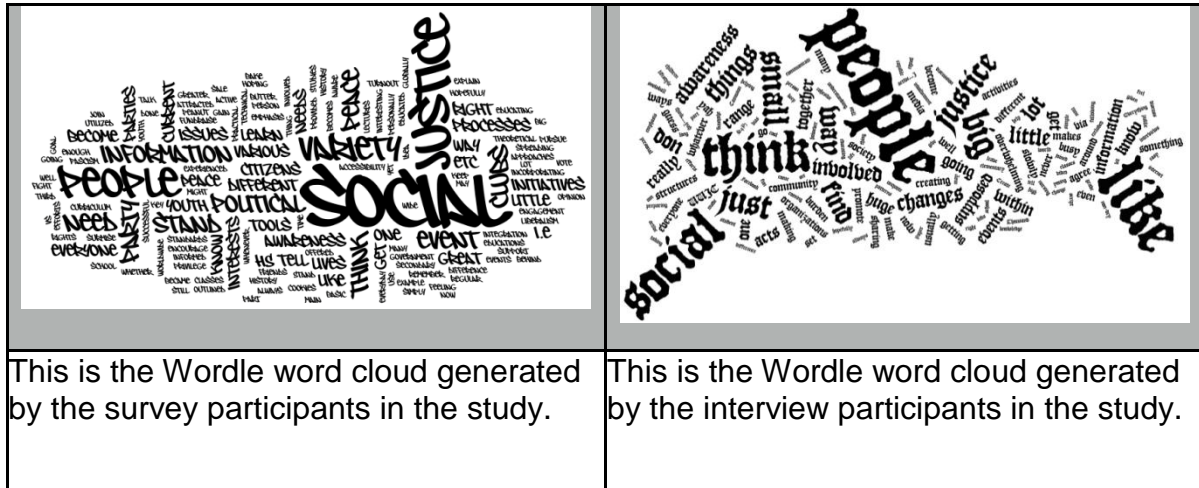
As the Stand4Peace club was continually engaged in promoting opportunities for the betterment of our world, I wanted to be able to represent their reflections on their involvement in the club in a prominent manner and the Wordle tool was a nifty facilitator for this purpose. What follows is a discussion of some key aspects of what the word clouds revealed.

Figure 1.1 shows first the word cloud generated by the complete text of the nine survey respondents for question seven, “How should we prepare citizens to be active in social justice?”

Next to that is Figure 1.2, which is a word cloud generated by the interview participants in the study. I chose similar ‘randomizations’ in an attempt to provide for a fair comparison, though no two are the same in this ‘snowflake’ system it uses, or so it would seem.

Note the prominent words that emerge from both clouds, such as “social” and “people”.

Figure 1.1



The next question for analysis using Wordle is “Since graduation have you been involved in any social justice activities?”

Here are the word clouds generated for the survey participants (figure 1.3) and the interview participants (figure 1.4):

Figure 1.3

Figure 1.4

Implications

Many of the former members of S4P commented on their improved awareness of issues presented in the news. They expressed the belief that their critical thinking faculties had improved, which allowed them to view the news in a filtered-filter manner. Students believed they were better able to deconstruct news reports, and claims to have a sharpened awareness of the motivations of those who would seek to benefit from the exploitation and misery of other creatures, human and otherwise. This seems to be, in at least some way, a result of being exposed to the values and ethics embodied in the community of care the zones of proximal development of space we shared together. This awareness was modeled and reinforced not only within the group dynamic, but also more importantly as an underpinning and essential material for the fabrication of the culture of the institution from which it was created. This is a note that has resonated for me in my lengthy association with the school. Our school song, as sung by the Old Wavers, a teacher led rock group, of which I am a long-standing member, contains many lyrics (Longpre, K, 1981) that reinforce this theme and vision, some of which are as follows:

“We don’t let our buddies be forgotten” and

“I’m proud to be a Hokie here from Spectrum, a place where even squares can have a ball”.

More than tolerance, the lyrics reflect the spirit of inclusion that is the ideal that reflects the vision for our collective school community. The goal for the students is to have them internalize this vision, enact it through their everyday lives and allow these ideas to bloom beyond merely the school context. In this sense these are powerful, sustainable ideas that can and should be

extended into the world. *Stand4Peace* as an organization is another vehicle that allows the students to realize these concepts into concrete actions and good works.

As a long marcher in the vocation of education and from the perspective of one who has had the opportunity and good fortune to develop a career, a pedagogical vision, and a praxis of love, as participant in a school that has acted as a lighthouse for over two decades, I know the pull of this particular institution is powerful and consistent. Spectrum Hokies are nearly as apt to drop by one semester or ten years after graduation. It is not unusual for students at our school to extend their studies at Spectrum, often for academic reasons, but sometimes just for the safe, secure, encouraging and caring atmosphere that the school provides. There are surely exceptions to this supportive culture. I am not suggesting that the School is a Utopian society; however, those who are not committed to the ideals the school has historically chosen to embody and continues to espouse, are the exception, not the norm.

Pulling back the veil to reveal the symmetry and symbiotic nature of the world we inhabit, the planetary reverberation of the Fibonacci series through art, architecture, music and the human face, we need to evolve to allow these natural balanced symmetrical tendencies to flower in our own lives and activities. Kind intentions must be reinforced with kind actions and interactions in order to foster the growth of these auto-catakinetic systems of social justice.

Recognizing the value of promoting communities of care by embodying these values in an institutional context and extending these interactions into the democratized, digitized world of social media must be a direction followed by educational practices in order to transform society into evolving egalitarian concepts. Respectful, mutually beneficial relations which promote harmony and the sharing of ideas, the best ideas; these are the relations which should be modeled, mentored and promoted on as many levels as possible throughout all strata of society.

Analysis

The surveys and the interviews seem to suggest that there was some influence from being part of the group that enabled or motivated the students to want to contribute in each of their respective ways. There were no negative reactions to any of the questions. The responses were unanimously positive, which was both encouraging and gratifying to me as a researcher; however, it must be stressed that these were my students with whom I had a strong bond, which, admittedly may undermine the validity of these results somewhat. The participants were spread over a respectable range of years in terms of the life of the group as it has evolved into the Social Justice LD (Locally Developed) course which I also helped to facilitate in 2010, and which had its first cohort of students commence in the fall of 2011.

The majority of the recollections by the former members of S4P were of events and activities that were largely student led.

The overall positive level of willingness of the subjects to participate in the study was also very encouraging, as there were respondents who agreed within minutes. It must be restated, however, that the student's immediate willingness to participate in the study, while helpful to me as a researcher, may be skewed by my existing relationship with them as they were my students. I would suggest that further research in this area would be best served by a more objective approach. That being said, the results of my research have shown several discernible themes.

I have chosen to group the analysis of the results of my study into the following thematic areas: *Emergence; Community of care, Importance of awareness, Recognition of the significance*

of the potential and power to make change through the actions of groups of like-minded people, and Willing to go against what has been done before. The thematic areas chosen both reflect the research that underpins this study and more importantly, the sentiments expressed by the participants. I will begin each of the themes with a quote from the students to illustrate each of the themes and to focus the reader's attention on the voices that emerge.

Analysis of Survey Results

The Theme of Emergence

“It started with us. Then we had to get more students. Then we got the staff. And then we went outside and we just kept trying to build up.”

The process of emergence is essentially demonstrated by these comments. The participant discusses the notion of a small group of like-minded individuals who come together as a community of practice. Communities of practice spread as nodes and the nodes begin to take action and the nodes spread. Perhaps the school acts as a space that allows the communities of practice to come together to create these nodes of social justice and because the school is such a closed, supported environment, those nodes are able to take actions that are manifestly achievable, repeatable and provable.

The collaborations that the participant describes are allowed as a result of the common meeting place that these communities of practice provide and which are thereby nurtured and allowed to develop and flourish by means of a conscious praxis maintained by the important connected mentors.

There seems to be an instinctive understanding of the process of emergence that the participants reflect in their responses. Allusions to metaphors such as the growth of plants, the

development of tidal wave formations, snowballing all speak to an innate understanding of the concept that the whole is indeed greater than the sum of its parts.

Despite the fact that these students have not been formally exposed to the ideas and concepts of general systems theory, there is clearly evident of the instinctive understanding of the process of emergence:

“Small changes do have a big impact on society.”

“Following what matters most to you as opposed to what others tell you”.

Again, S4P 4 shows an awareness of the idea that real change does not come from a structured top-down perspective where the end is introduced, but rather through baby steps initiated in reaction to perceived injustice. Once again, the theme is reiterated that there is no one right path to social justice. When people are encouraged to explore their own passion for social change, more creative solutions become possible.

Awareness, acceptance and action are ideas that definitely emerged through this research.

We need to value actions, whether or not successful, because if the action is undertaken to promote social justice, these actions may have positive impact beyond what we originally deemed to be hallmarks of success. We may never know the positive impact or inspiration generated by activities such as the Fuzzy Fifty.

“Everything people do can make a difference, no matter how big or small”. This comment again emphasizes the type of opinion held by the majority of the participants in the study. The ability to create change on many levels in a variety of ways, shapes and forms is a concept not lost on these students.

Schools are only able to provide the common meeting place for these nodes of social justice if they are supportive of actions which support positive social change. They have to allow

these grassroots movements to emerge from within the school community. Examples that several participants provided include the Fuzzy Fifty, a popular event which one of the participants ran fifty laps of our sports fields in the mascot's costume. Initiatives which are student driven may succeed or fail; institutions must be open to experimenting with ideas and initiatives which strive towards positive social change. As educators working alongside our students, we must together be able to celebrate the victories when they come and collectively learn from the failures when they occur.

For example, in the case of the Fuzzy Fifty⁷, the participant needed to be taken to the hospital as a result of the bizarre coupling of both hypothermia and heat exhaustion as a result of running fifty laps of our sports field in a mascot's costume under the blazing May sun. After that incident, we no longer allowed the participants to wear the mascot costume.

The victory of social justice is in the pursuit of it, not necessarily in the relative success or failure of a one-off event. Change is gradual and it grows from the roots up. It is a wave. When a participant stated, "cultivate the change you want to see", more reflection of emergence is shown, as the participant described a path rich with connection to the issues and actions associated with social justice. In a humble way, the participant downplayed the significantly positive impact that he is making in the world, not only with his attitude and mindset, but also aligning those sentiments with his everyday actions as a person.

The participant is attempting to put on a free concert in his homeland of Rwanda on the twentieth anniversary of the genocide there. In addition, he is planning to run across Canada to raise awareness for his cause, and has managed to already garner attention from some powerful figures in the entertainment industry, including Oprah Winfrey.

"Don't burden us with what is supposed to be."

⁷ The Fuzzy Fifty is named after our school's spirit mascot the Warm Fuzzy.

That comment and the accompanying is the essence of the profits over people, top-down, and me-first ideology. In the context of challenging paradigms and moving ideas in different directions, more attention must be directed towards resisting those that are unsustainable.

If you establish a rigid structure it destroys the ability of those people within that structure to help provide us with answers. Some of our best answers have come from unexpected sources, which did not function well following existing structures.

Mahatma Gandhi, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and Nelson Mandela, certainly thought outside of the dominant paradigms in order to realize their respective visions.

The path of forcing linear, top-down management paradigms is the path of the residential school, it is the path that has denied the ancient wisdoms of the indigenous people, derided the contributions of the wise grandmothers, and resulted in the loss of many ancient ways of knowing.

Will we allow these voices to re-emerge some of the lost knowledge and wisdom of our elders? The willingness to collectively strive for change by working together towards common goals is essential as the world is continually besieged by one calamity after another.

The British Columbia Teacher's Federation (2013) provides teachers with a Social Justice Lens teaching resource guide which emphasizes a focus on equity, framed through a perimeter of participatory democracy, transformative practice, and systemic change to promote civil society.

The ways to achieve these goals is through Access, which is open and available to all, Agency, which entails the intention to effect change, Advocacy, which provides the skills to effect change and Solidarity action, the process of collectively working for change.

One of the questions raised in the booklet is “How socially just is my classroom?” While seemingly innocuous at first, the question may open up a Johari window (2009) that might reveal the breeze of bigotry to you, upon close inspection. It is imperative that teachers be aware of their words and actions at all times, particularly around issues affecting the minority and potentially marginalized constituents who may be subjected to further ridicule and torment, possibly as a direct or indirect result of a teacher’s tacit reinforcement of a negative social injustice due to the silence and or inaction of the classroom leader.

Donna Beagle (2013) reminds us to “reflect on our own biases” (p. 2). If we are to honestly examine the troubling issues we face in education, at the root of many issues which undermine student success we will often find poverty. She reminds us to “pay attention to class issues in the same way you would obvious differences, like race or gender” (p. 2).

The issue of teacher intolerance is perhaps more of a widespread problem than some in the teaching business may care to acknowledge, yet I have had the practice reported to me privately by students on several occasions. While it is disconcerting that the practice of intolerance is being quasi-condoned by silence and /or inaction, it is encouraging that the students who have been subjected to this type of demeaning behavior and commentary would feel empowered enough to point this troublesome occurrence to a colleague of the he who stood accused of the egregious conduct.

The challenge remains, however; how do we implement the kinds of sweeping, systemic changes that I am proposing at an institutional level? How do we get from me to we? Social media are veritable ubiquitous tools. Viral videos make the world rounds in moments. Violations of professional conduct are circulated as tweets before one can say Twitter. Social media can also accentuate the positive. A recent viral anti-bullying video by Canadian spoken-

word poet Shane Koyczan called “To this day” is one such example. With millions of views since its debut, the video is a powerful indictment of the negative consequences of bullying.

As well, there have been numerous viral videos showing people involved participating in random acts of kindness. In a recent especially heartwarming example (2013), a senior high school basketball player is seen passing the ball to a developmentally challenged young man given the chance to play by his inclusive coach. The really amazing aspect is that the player who passed the ball to the developmentally challenged boy was on the opposing team. The whole arena erupted when the developmentally challenged boy finally made a basket after numerous attempts. I believe examples like this do reflect a positive direction that society has taken with respect to issues of inclusion and social justice.

Community of care

“I was always excited waking up every morning and expressing my ideas to the teacher.” Imagine if we all had schools full of eager learners such as this, expressing the same collective sentiment? While achieving unanimity on this mindset in a school may be a utopian vision, there are steps we can take to help facilitate the kinds of favorable conditions for this type of development in our students and school communities.

The creation of communities of practice is evident in the repetition on the part of the participants in the interview process on the importance of developing teams, in the ability to extrapolate actions within the community of the school to impacts on the community beyond the school context.

One participant commented that “Schools don’t just have to be places of higher learning. They can be places where people are inspired to greater acts of citizenship.”

Indeed, it has always puzzled me as an educator that we do not have a citizenship class which would promote positive school goals. This would not necessarily promote a certain right way to live, but rather would act with the intention of helping everyone and including everyone.

More than one participant discussed the importance of raising the awareness of the ability of the community to provide aid; in effect, it is the engineering within the community the ability and the desire to do so.

“Equality and fairness for all” has been common refrain during these interviews. Some of the former members express difficulty finding ways to connect with communities of practice outside of the school environment. It’s not that this desire to pursue social justice is not there; it is the difficulty connecting with like-minded communities of practice outside of the school context. Schools must promote a culture within the school community which consciously promotes social justice.

Beagle (2013) makes several recommendations which might lead us in the direction of the elusive concept of a more inclusionary educational paradigm.

She reminds us to “acknowledge growth regardless of where your students are starting from, look at where your students are coming from and be generous in praising their successes.” It should be noted that Beagle’s suggestions are framed not only through the lens of social justice as shown above, but also as a direct acknowledgement of the existing inequities of our society as demonstrated by our (BC) appalling childhood poverty rates, a fact that further underscores the importance of acting to promote more equitable opportunities for all members of our society, the Access piece noted as a key goal in the BCTF document.

The participant acknowledges the importance of social networking which emphasizes the need for educators to be accepting these new ways of knowing as being both important and

legitimate. We need to value these emerging ways of communicating and interacting, as opposed to being dismissive of these potential boons to networking and spreading the word.

One participant commented that “Schools don’t just have to be places of higher learning. They can be places where people are inspired to greater acts of citizenship.”

Indeed, it has always puzzled me as an educator that we do not have a citizenship class which would promote positive school goals. This would not necessarily promote a certain right way to live, but rather would act with the intention of helping everyone and including everyone. S4P 3 discusses the importance of raising the awareness of the ability of the community to provide aid; in effect, it is the engineering within the community the ability and the desire to do so.

Importance of awareness

“It requires for us the ability to adapt, to think quickly and to be forward thinking.” In this comment, the participant underscores the importance of awareness not only for students, but also for adults. The participant also reminds the adults that “we need to listen to what the students say”.

In other words, we need to carefully listen to our students and make adjustments in our delivery of programs such as Stand4Peace, if we are to remain relevant. We would be well advised to really hear the voices of our children:

“Create awareness that people are capable of change, showing them even what children can do; there are elementary schools all around the world that can show this. Look at the Paper Clips and One Thousand Cranes that are made. Everything someone does can promote social justice.”

Will we allow these voices of our students to re-emerge some of the lost knowledge and wisdom of our elders? The willingness to collectively strive for change by working together

towards common goals is essential as the world is continually besieged by one calamity after another.

The nature of a school community which is supported by an underlying philosophy of listening to the students and being flexible to their needs, promotes an environment where communities of practice are more able to create meaningful change in other places, beyond the school context. The example of the community of practice the participant described, helped to create a node which gave Stand4Peace greater reach outside of our immediate school community.

“Following what matters most to you as opposed to what others tell you”.

Again, this participant shows an awareness of the idea that real change does not come from a structured top-down perspective where the end is introduced, but rather through baby steps initiated in reaction to perceived injustice. Once again, the theme is reiterated that there is no one right path to social justice. When people are encouraged to explore their own passion for social change, more creative solutions become possible.

Almost unanimously, the survey participants speak to the importance of the acceptance of new ways of knowing and flexibility and variety in approaches to problem solving:

“With effective use of the right tools, whether through lectures, videos, or various social media tools, various social issues can be outlined and everyday citizens (through this increased accessibility and engagement) can gain awareness and hopefully be motivated to join causes that pursue social justice efforts.”

While this participant’s comments effectively underline the theme of awareness, other identified themes are also illustrated here, including emergence, community of care, and the following theme of recognizing the significance of the potential and power to make change through the actions of groups of like-minded people.

Recognition of the significance of the potential and power to make change through the actions of groups of like-minded people.

“I still volunteer at Our Place and I help out there and they have also given me a position to keep an eye out, like if I see anyone who doesn’t have food or anything, I inform them, and I will bring them along with me, which is kind of fun. I also volunteer at school with Unicef and Water Brigade. We are trying to raise money to go to Peru to build another well for them in another location.”

Effectively the school can be amplifiers of communities of practice which promote social change, for good or ill. There are discernible themes as evidenced through the interviews; repetitive mentions of the importance of awareness and the recognition of the significance of the potential and power to make change through the actions of groups of like-minded people:

“It was a good feeling knowing that my school was involved in and had an impact on other places around the world and not just within our classroom within the four walls of the club Stand4Peace, within the building, but it was building awareness of what was going on around the world and then seeing the passion among my peers.”

The scope and magnitude of the club’s efforts are neatly summarized in the participant’s comments, reflecting a distinct awareness of the power and ability for the school and Stand4Peace to create change, and to facilitate the passion and synergy required for this process to occur.

“I am going in to the field of education and I have been taking opportunities to look into how to create social justice movements within my classroom and how to get kids aware of what is going on and just igniting their passion.”

Ideally, more participants in social justice clubs such as Stand4Peace will continue to plant the seeds of social justice by endeavoring to follow a similar path back to school and share this wisdom with future generations of students.

Willing to go against what has been done before

One participant's definition of social justice is as follows:

“Making people aware of what is going on around the world and trying to make a change that better society and better the people around us by just creating understanding as well as willing to go against what has been done before because people have been doing it, they are interested in making social change for the betterment of society.”

Almost unanimously, the survey participants speak to the importance of the acceptance of new ways of knowing and flexibility and variety in approaches to problem solving.

It seems that people who tend to promote social justice are rarely self-promotional. That is perhaps an impediment to growth in the pursuit of developing this mindset, and possibly the antithesis of spreading the word of a club like Stand4Peace, but as I have shown throughout the study. The tools made available through social media enable our good deeds to not go unnoticed.

Consequently, when the students find themselves outside an environment where those qualities are actively given support and promotion, they find it difficult to connect with like-minded individuals and are therefore limited in their ability to create and maintain new and active communities of practice. This is precisely where the liminal spaces that the internet offers can benefit those who are presently and in the future experiencing difficulty connecting with these communities of practice described.

“There are many little things people can do...taking the emphasis off these big one-off events.

Not taking on responsibility for creating huge changes in order to feel successful is a keynote of many participant's responses. Rather, that every positive action, and every positive change, internal or external, is a valuable progression towards meaningful social justice changes, but more effectively and sustainability.

Awareness, acceptance and action are ideas that definitely emerged through this research.

We need to value actions, whether or not successful, because if the action is undertaken to promote social justice, these actions may have positive impact beyond what we originally deemed to be hallmarks of success. We may never know the positive impact or inspiration generated by activities such as the Fuzzy Fifty.

“Everything people do can make a difference, no matter how big or small”.

This comment again emphasizes the type of opinion held by the majority of the participants in the study. Many drops are required to fill the lake, but each drop adds some measure of volume, no matter how small.

“Small intentions that people have to promote social change” is a statement which again speaks to an emerging theme within the study that points to a general awareness of this phenomenon and a sensibility being developed throughout the consciousness of the participants. We are recognizing that the splashy one-off events are not the real keys to improving social justice in our communities but instead, it really is the little, day to day things that those surveyed believed actually count.

“Ask people what they think social justice means to them.”

Again, the rejection of a top-down approach is advocated, pointing away from traditional hierarchy. The participants talk about the importance of striving towards activities that have value in and of themselves, like those which involve organizing, meeting and planning. Concrete goals are important, but not the most important factor. The pursuit of the goals is what really counts, the intentionality. It is the journey that is important, even if we do not immediately arrive at our destination, or even the destination we thought we might find. It may well be different than what we expect.

The theme of listening to youth, engaging youth and promoting opportunities for youth is a recurring theme expressed by many of the study's participants. Those decision makers in the education system in BC and elsewhere would be sensible to heed the clarion call for inclusion of youth in the problem solving of today and tomorrow, as we as a planet are continually faced with emerging challenges which may require divergent, novel ways of thinking to create solutions or at least to ameliorate some of these issues.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Current research from England (Layous, 2012) has revealed that there is a direct, positive correlation between kindness and the reduction in bullying. The more people are shown kindness, have acts of kindness modeled for them, and have this concept reinforced consistently through hierarchical structures and institutions, the less apt these people are to use bullying tactics in their day-to-day interactions. Academia should not have to tell us this, which it could be safely assumed, is something we should already know. It is helpful, however to have this notion reinforced by peer-reviewed, scientific rigor. We must change our priorities before it is too late. In an interview with *Living on Earth*, David Suzuki (2010) neatly summed up the predicament we collectively face in modern societies: "Each of us now in the industrialized world, carries dozens of toxic chemicals dissolved in our bodies- over a pound of plastic dissolved in our bodies. We are the consequence of this industrial growth, because we have elevated the economy above the very things that keep us alive. And this is madness!" (p. 2).

Our subjugation of nature is an issue that demonstrates an essential flaw in our nature. Creating and sustaining a healthier relationship with the planet would be a logical place to begin the transformation of humanity. We have the duty to reimagine and reconstitute our relationship with the planet and curb our destructive, parasitic and apathetic tendencies as a species and

develop our capacity to collectively embrace a global mindset that could be characterized as symbiotic, caring and loving.

This paradigm shift is still a few monkeys short of a hundred, but change is a wave. Research is showing that it is ‘cool to be kind’: as the brilliant Elvis Costello (1978) once asked us in a musical question, “What’s so funny about Peace, Love and Understanding”? We are all innately aware that these concepts of social justice and equality are important to enact yet, somehow, these ideas and ideals do not prevail in so many ways, shapes and forms. Now that we are facing calamitous outcomes on a planetary level that is what most climate research has suggested, but we are also facing numerous social issues that could be quantifiably be lessened by heeding the clarion calls for change being shown on so many different levels and manifestations. Whether it is the Deep Horizon disaster, underwater nuclear testing, the great plastic swirl or any other such abominations, the wave of change will wash over us, though our positioning on that wave is yet to be finally determined; be it rest assured, however that right now we have been getting pummeled by the first set of waves in this new age, but there are multiple sets rolling in. To extend the surfing metaphor, somewhat as an homage to Dr. C. Winch, somewhere in England, who is demonstrably unaware of the massively popular surfing culture throughout the world, are we going to “Hang Ten” and gloriously ride that wave as kind, symbiotic, sharing entities or are we going to choke on the poisonous waves and dissolve into the toxic mess described by Suzuki (2010) that we have created for ourselves?

The Zone of Proximal Development espoused by Vygotsky (1962) pertains to this study as we have, through the S4P group, attempted to consciously shift the emphasis of the school culture towards tolerance and acceptance. By empowering the students to give them the latitude to choose the types of causes, fundraisers and strategies while maintaining a facilitator

background role as a teacher, a guide on the side, as it were, the grassroots elements of the group really began to flourish.

Recommendations

Over the years, I have gained a lot of insight about the social dynamics of working with passionate young people. From these experiences and combined with valuable data I have gathered from this study, I can provide some modicum of guidance for those wishing to embark on a similar journey to mine.

Part of the process had been to provide options and arrays of charitable causes and issues to choose from. This can be overwhelming, but research the backgrounds and how the money flows through these organizations. For example, if there seems to be a disproportionate amount of resources allocated to the administration and bureaucracy of a charitable organization, such as over 25%, then a re-examination of the club's fundraising beneficiaries may be justified. If an organization falls into disrepute, such as in the case of *Invisible Children*, handle the situation open and democratically with your students.

While you may be the one opening the door to show different options or causes to pursue, do not close the door on opportunities or suggestions that your students may generate. Be open to the notion that these students, who choose to be engaged in social justice activities are often well-informed and enlightened, often beyond us as educators. If we can create the kinds of caring environments as suggested by Noddings (1992), consciously modeling the effect of Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (1962). From there, if we set forth firmly on Russell's path to the good life (1929), we might, even unwittingly promote emergent, synergistic systems of social justice, to appropriate Corning's idea of emergence. We might discover, as I did, that these students are creating positive change in society, in so many surprising ways.

Harnessing the power of social media, apps and digital technology is also important for educators. We are able to reach out and communicate with the world in so many ways, and a strong grasp of these tools is essential as a researcher and practitioner. These tools have allowed me to gather information unobtrusively and to connect with the participants of my study. School districts my wish to consider offering more in-services and workshops to educate practitioners.

While the flexibility for creating liminal spaces has flourished in the digital age, the extra duties and tasks associated with the day-to-day existence of a modern classroom teacher need to be considered. E-mail correspondence especially, is one example where the demands often outpace the expectations to the point of what Apple (1986) calls “intensification.” Another example of intensification for teachers, particularly for those at the secondary level, is the grades spreadsheet. The expectation for students and parents is that these spreadsheets be continually updated, for some on a daily basis. It is against this backdrop that school administrators should be mindful to not overtax those who might offer the best chance for success for our students.

If there exists within a school the willingness on the part of staff to create a club such as Stand4Peace, then there are a few considerations. Administrative support is key, as substitute teacher coverage, release time and flexibility with student’s schedules is often required to facilitate the success of conferences, projects and club activities. A comfortable space is required, relative to the size of the group. A computer and a white board will suffice initially, but digital projectors and high fidelity sound can be helpful to a presentation, so technical ability or a solid connection to one who has access and knowledge of these tools is also helpful. Try to cultivate a growing network of contacts in your local community. Follow these leads with correspondence and invitations to speak to your club. Be open to the suggestions that your students provide. Eventually, your club may develop into a course, as it has with Stand4Peace.

Though it is usually necessary to start a social justice club as an extracurricular group, I suggest it is desirable for many reasons, such as those listed above, to eventually develop the club into a locally, board approved course, which allows for regular meetings, more adequate resources and the appeal of credit toward graduation for the students involved. I would suggest also that if the course becomes a selectable option for the students, that it be sequenced in the timetable as a year-long course, so as to maximize the potential for fulfilling individual and group outcomes.

Finally, I would recommend to anyone who chooses to follow a similar path within the field of education that they not hesitate to form a social justice group. The intrinsic rewards and rich relationships that result from this type of work are tremendous incentives for others to follow this path. Further, the effectiveness of the group within its proper context should also be assessed at a later time, to put the relative success in some kind of perspective. Also, it was wonderful to reconnect with these special students and relive some powerful moments that we shared. When these connections happened, I reflected on some of the incredible opportunities I have been given as a result of my experience with Stand4Peace. The experience of being with thousands of other like-minded individuals, such as what I witnessed at the three We Day events is an example of the amazing benefits that can be realized by being involved in the pursuit of social justice ideals. The opportunity to present at the 2006 International Peace Conference at the University of British Columbia, or the recording of *Spectrum for Africa* are directly related to my passion for social justice. These are only some personal examples of what kinds of opportunities or experiences that may arise from affiliation with the cause of social justice. Yours will be an equally rewarding and valuable experience, it is maybe just a matter of beginning the process and staying the course. After that, the self-correcting system will take over and you can marvel at

your creation. Of course, we are talking about teenagers, so the aforementioned comment is meant partially in jest. If the conditions for success are properly set, however, as noted above, then the teacher-sponsor of such a club can realistically function as a ‘guide on the side’ and not as a ‘sage on the stage’. Perhaps the school may wish to consider offering the Social Justice 12 credited course in a linear format, which offers year-round continuity in its favor. This timetable alteration might help to sustain the future success of the course and benefit its members in some way, but that will be left for the conclusions and implications of the study.

As my research has shown, there is a need for groups such as Stand4Peace in our school communities. These kinds of groups need to be promoted to students as a means to combat apathy and to confront the pressing issues that education and society face. We need to empower these passionate young people, and show them a path that leads to a mutually agreeable version of a good life. Hard questions will be raised by these young warriors in this relentless pursuit of social justice, status quos’ may be challenged and eventually rethought, but as educators we should embrace this emergence. Whether we want to or not, we will be affected by this emergence and perhaps if we choose to follow the recommendations I have outlined, we in the field of education may serve to function as positive agents of this social reshaping of the status quo. By modeling and contributing to communities of care in our schools and promoting ideals of social justice, we may plant the seed in our students and, if we are lucky enough, we might see these ideals flower into positive social change. What I ultimately gleaned from this study is summarized in the following sections.

Key Findings

1. Clubs such as Stand4Peace can help students find inspiration more easily.

In the words of one of the participants, “Schools don’t just have to be places of higher learning. They can be places where people are inspired to greater acts of citizenship”. By giving students opportunities that a club such as Stand4Peace provides, we can help students to effectively pursue their social justice goals.

2. Promoting clubs such as Stand4Peace in schools can help students develop important insights and gain valuable perspectives.

As one of the participants remarked, “Within the club, the members wanted to either feel good about helping somebody or they wanted to do it for reasons beyond themselves. They wanted to create an environment where empathy grows, where we all understand what is going on with other people and to make an effort to make a difference, make change, or make a change within ourselves to understand others and what they are going through.”

3. While their involvement in Stand4Peace has ended, their passion and commitment for Social justice, has not. This was a common theme that I found throughout the study.

As this participant clearly states the work continues: “I still volunteer at Our Place...they have given me a position to keep an eye out if I see someone with no food to inform them about it.”

4. The principle of self-replicating, auto-catakinetic systems is reflected in much of the data. To wit: “For me social justice is an idea that if you see something unjust you can take it upon yourself and find like-minded people to help cultivate that change that you want to see.”

5. The conscious maintenance of a caring community is essential to facilitate the kind of growth in our students that was the focus of this study:

“I was in an environment that encouraged me and the school has a very special place in my heart...being around teachers who were able to adapt quickly and listen, and for them to be able to be forward thinking was essential.”

6. Curricular choices are limited in the area of social justice. While extra-curricular clubs such as Stand4Peace are important vehicles for disseminating information regarding social justice, more can be done in this area to give students better access to courses and credits for graduation. At our school, Stand4Peace has evolved from an extra-curricular club to an actual locally developed course called Social Justice 12.

As one participant noted:

“There needs to be a greater integration of information in middle and secondary education. While Social Studies and History were interesting classes, there was very little information provided about social justice.”

Key Recommendations

1. Schools should promote clubs like Stand4Peace to pique student interest in social justice issues.

A club like Stand4Peace can positively enhance the culture of a school community.

2. Once club membership gets close to 30 students, it is time to evolve the club from extracurricular, voluntary status, to a credited, locally-developed course, primarily for the benefit of the student, but also for the benefit of the teacher.

This is potentially a classic Win/Win scenario, where both the student and the teacher benefit, as it assists the students with credits toward graduation, and also for the teacher who is not faced with offering this important curriculum “off the side of his/her desk.” There is a caveat to this approach, however. While there is a potential for mutual benefit for the student and teacher in a course setting, as opposed to an extra-curricular club, a sponsor may encounter

problems continuing the work started by a class that has ended. Thus, I would recommend that the course be run all year in a linear timetable format. In our school, I have added a Social Justice stream to my existing Student Leadership course, which runs all year and this continual supply of my students helps to preserve the continuity of the work being done by the one semester course, Social Justice 12.

3. Social media transcends the physical boundaries of a club or class and should be understood and integrated into similar programs.

If you are a teacher who is thinking of starting a similar program to the one described here, then familiarization with social media can be a valuable tool for retaining connection with participants in your program, and as a means to possibly explore further research in this area.

4. More study is needed in this area; thus, those who have sponsored similar clubs are encouraged to document their experiences and add to the growing body of knowledge resulting from studying the effects that belonging to social justice groups produces in the individual, and what the potential benefits to society may be from better understanding of these relationships.

Appendices

Appendix A

Note: Originally, I had undertaken the task of contacting the inventor of the tool to confirm its inclusion in my study as being legitimate and authorized by the creator himself, but upon closer inspection, of the website FAQ, that, in fact I could even, perish the thought, make money from these Wordle word clouds. I am free to use these creations as I please, academically, or otherwise. As the tool does not allow for the ability for the individual creators of the word clouds to save their unique creations, except to a public site for the world to enjoy, which seems maybe beyond the purview of this study. Therefore, I decided to use the Mac OSX screenshot capture tool, command/shift/4 to limit the parameters of the image to be captured as a screenshot, and with the ability to crop the image to just the outer edges of the word cloud. This technique allowed me to save the trouble of printing the document, which would later need to be scanned as well. On the F.A.Q. page for Wordle, this process is described in detail for Mac operating systems or PC computer platforms.

Appendix B**Documents and S4P group artifacts**

Though there were many others to choose from, here is a sampling of some of the documents produced over a ten year period. We often used amusing and eye-catching graphics to promote our group and its activities. Much of the artwork shown in the posters was created by co-founder Tom Gordon, to whom I extend a huge thank you for his assistance, friendship and inspiration to continue facilitating a positively developing social justice agenda at our school.

B.1

Stand 4 Peace

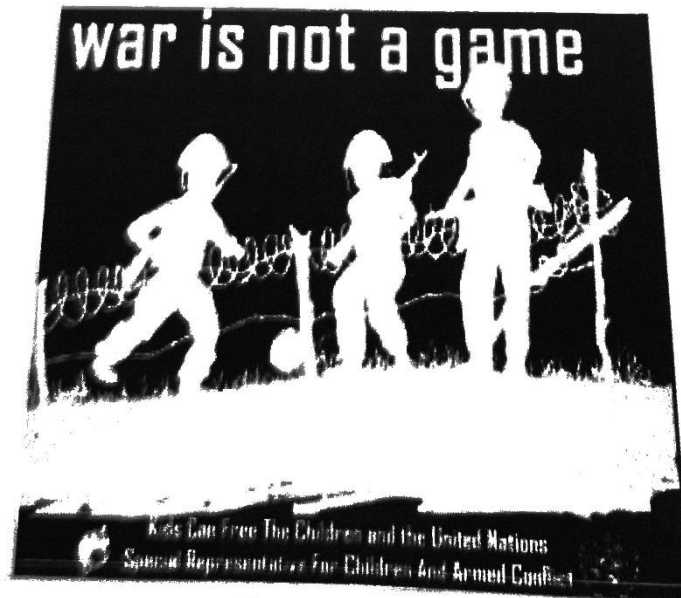
Presents

The Grand Unveiling Of The...

"Brick by Brick"

Campaign

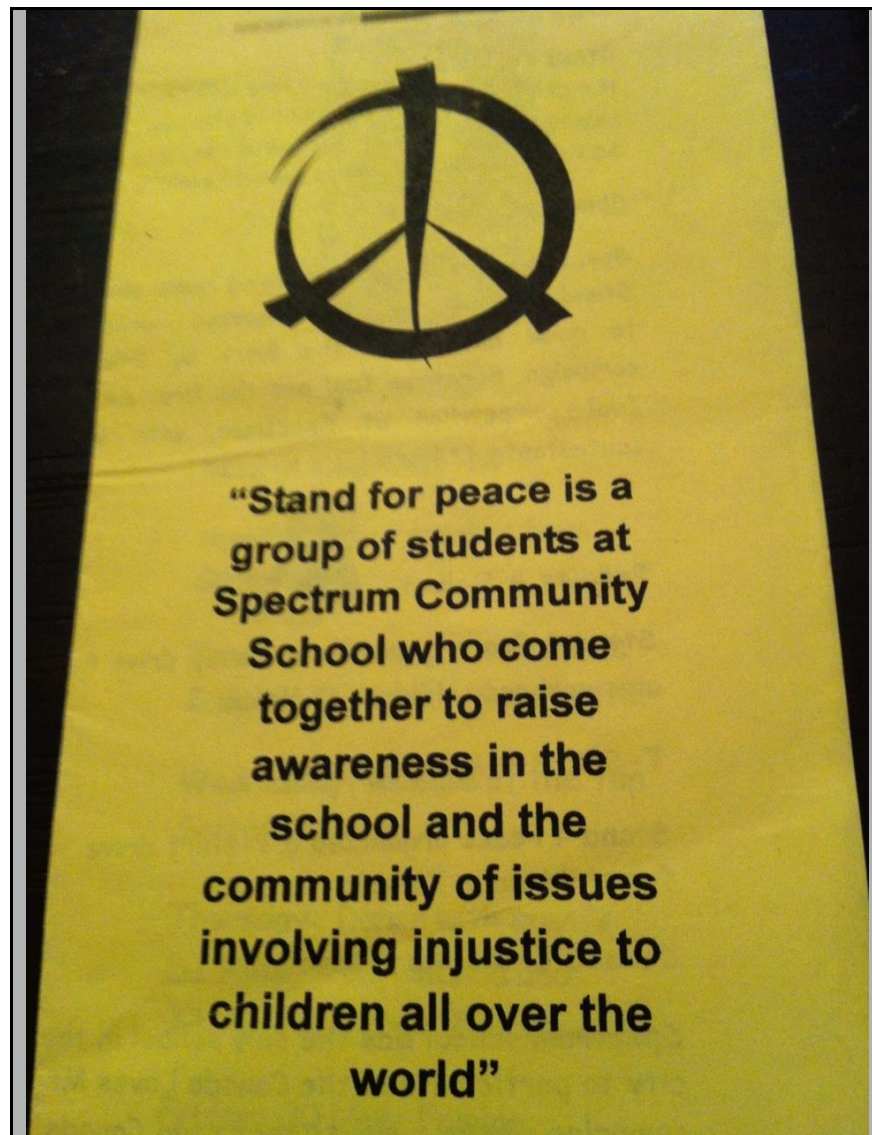
"Brick by Brick" is a campaign dedicated to building schools and educating the billions of underprivileged youth in third world countries in hopes of breaking the cycle of poverty.



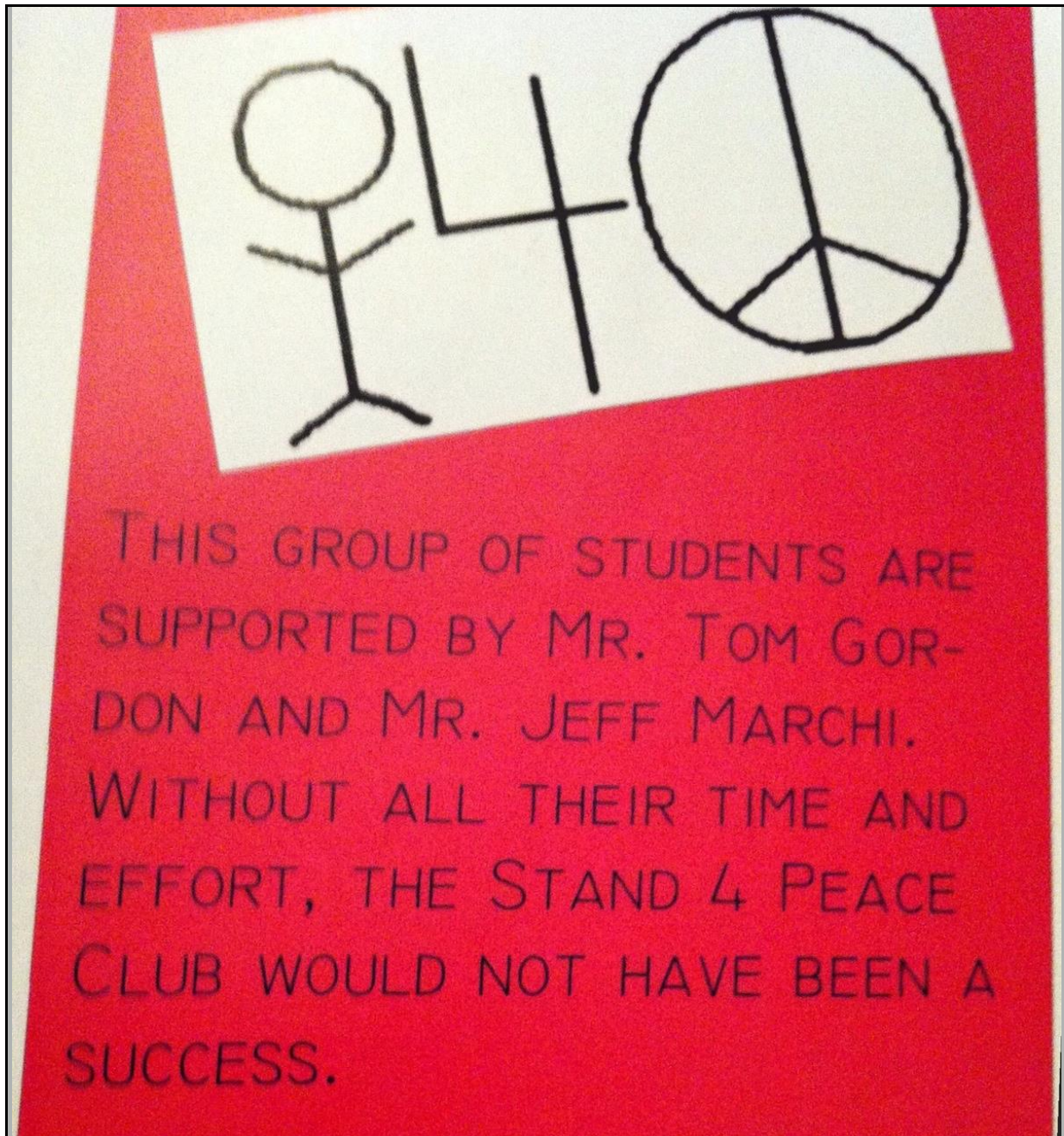
**Join Us In The Theatre @ Lunch
Wed., March 9th**

This event raised awareness of our campaign and eventually helped us to reach our goal and successfully complete the Brick by Brick challenge and have a school built through Free the Children in 2007.

B.2



This brochure was created for Club Day at Spectrum, and also used for our presentation at the 2006 World Peace Conference at UBC, which we were invited to speak.



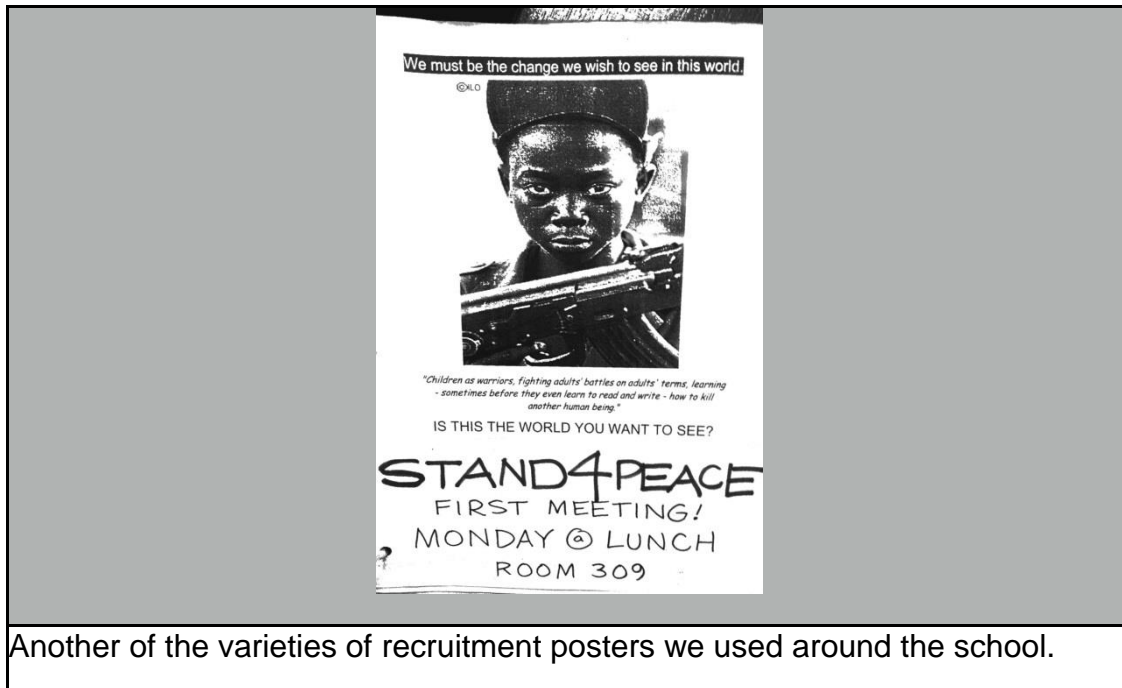
Part of a poster board presentation used to spread the word of Stand4Peace. We presented at several schools over the duration of the club's ten year existence.

B.4



A copy of our first advertisement. The group would enjoy dozens of new members during the course of its existence.

B.5




Another of the varieties of recruitment posters we used around the school.

B.6

Below is a hand drawn flyer for our fourth installment of the popular Perform 4 Peace concert and variety show. The co-founder of Stand4Peace, Tom Gordon, is the talented artist behind the eye-catching style represented by the communications and posters of the group.

PERFORM
4
PEACE



DINNER
5-7

SHOW
7-9:30

\$6

EACH
BOTH
\$10

WEDNESDAY,
MAY 31

TICKETS ON SALE NOW!

B.7


ONLY ^{NOW} 50¢ (INCLUDING 1 VOTING SLIP)
ADDITIONAL VOTING SLIPS: 25¢ ^{ea}
(AFTER PAYING)

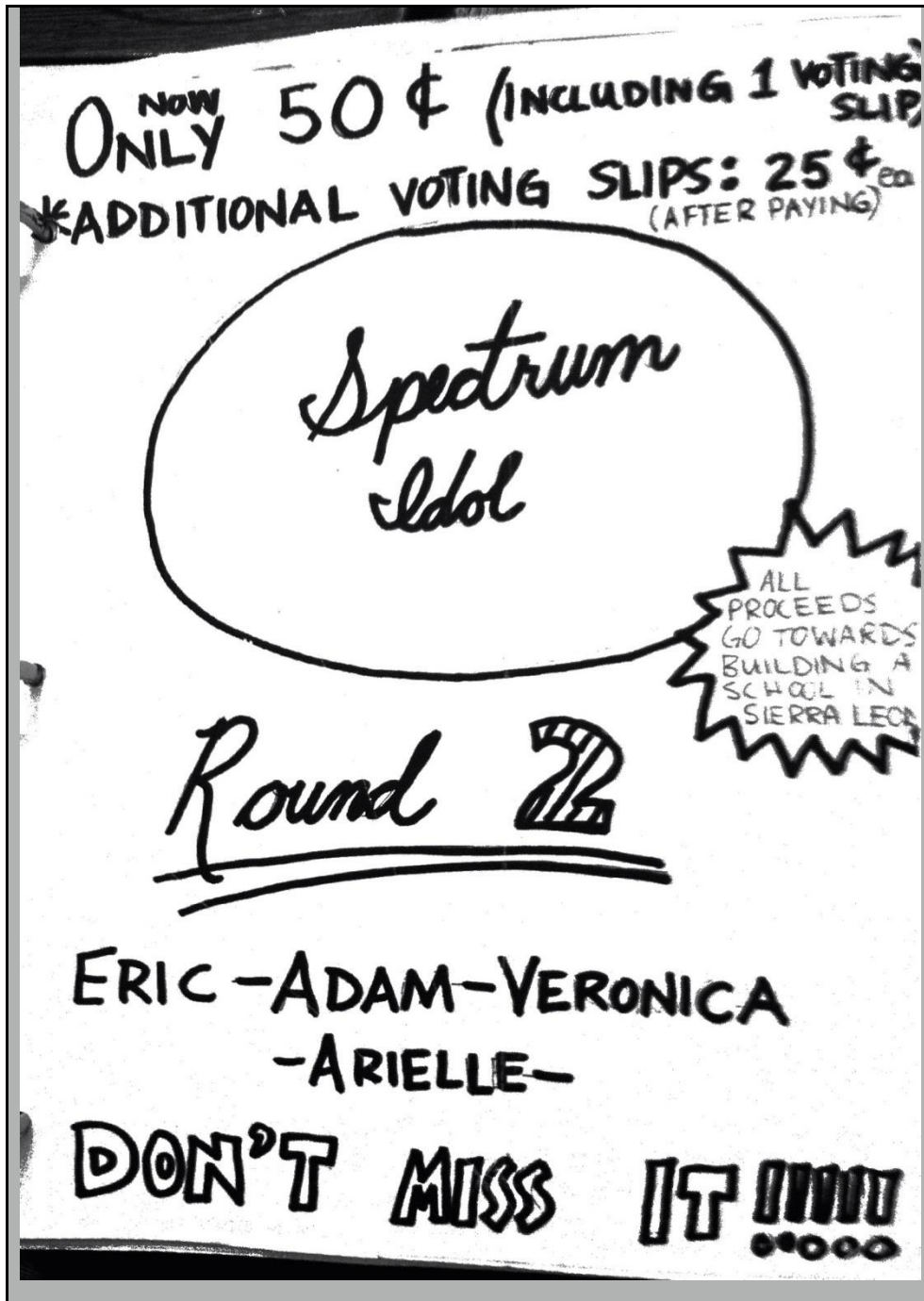
Spectrum
idol

ALL PROCEEDS GO TOWARDS BUILDING A SCHOOL IN SIERRA LEONE

Round 2B

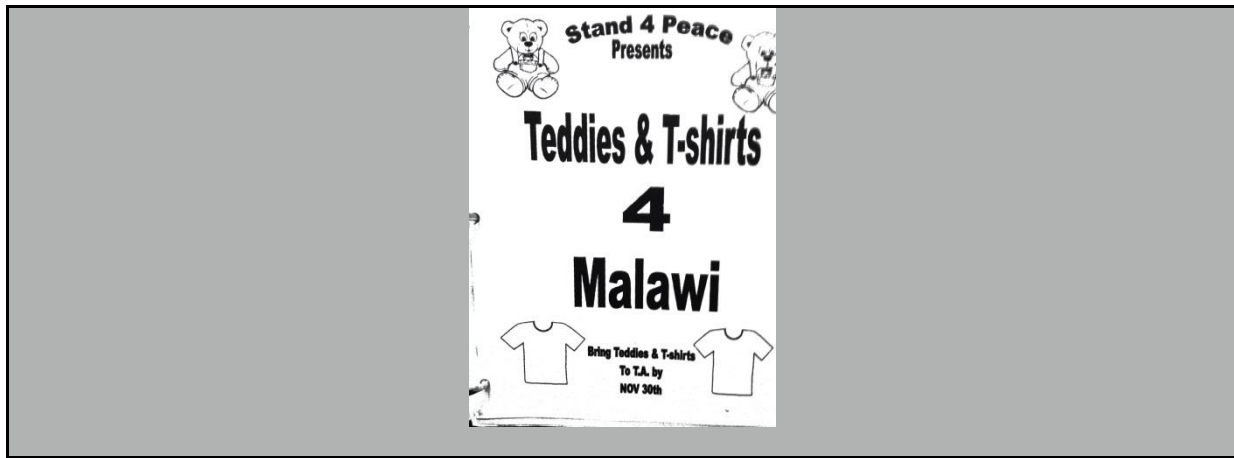
ERIC-ADAM-VERONICA
-ARIELLE-

DON'T MISS IT 



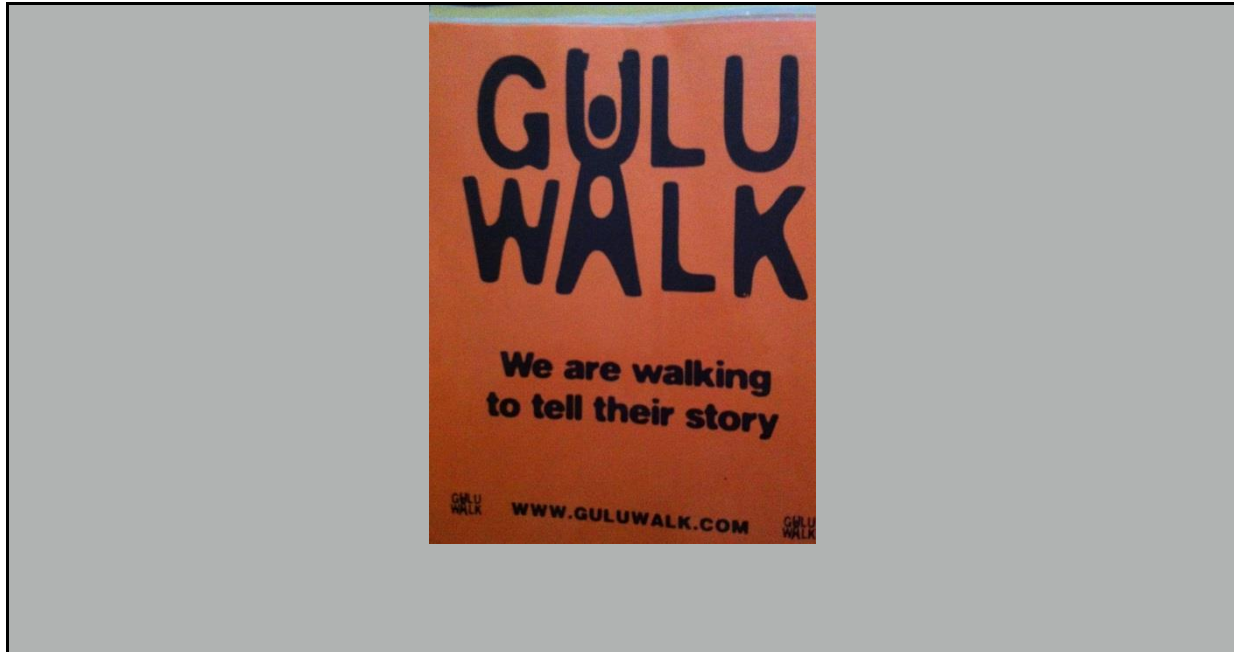
A voting slip from Spectrum Idol, our adaptation of the popular singing competition on television. Here, the proceeds go towards building a school in Africa, where in other years the money has helped victims of the Haiti earthquake, disadvantaged youth in Peru, and our own school-sponsored foster children in Malawi and Ecuador.

B.8



An example of one of the many global actions undertaken by the group. This was an initiative conceived by the students, and successfully so., Many stuffed teddies and donated t-shirts made their way to their happy recipients in Malawi, we were later informed, via e-mail.

B.9



Several of our students participated in this event over a three year period, a recreation of the walk faced by the night commuters, a so-called group of children forced to walk several miles nightly to the relative safety of a bus shelter, in order to escape forcible conscription in the rebel militia.

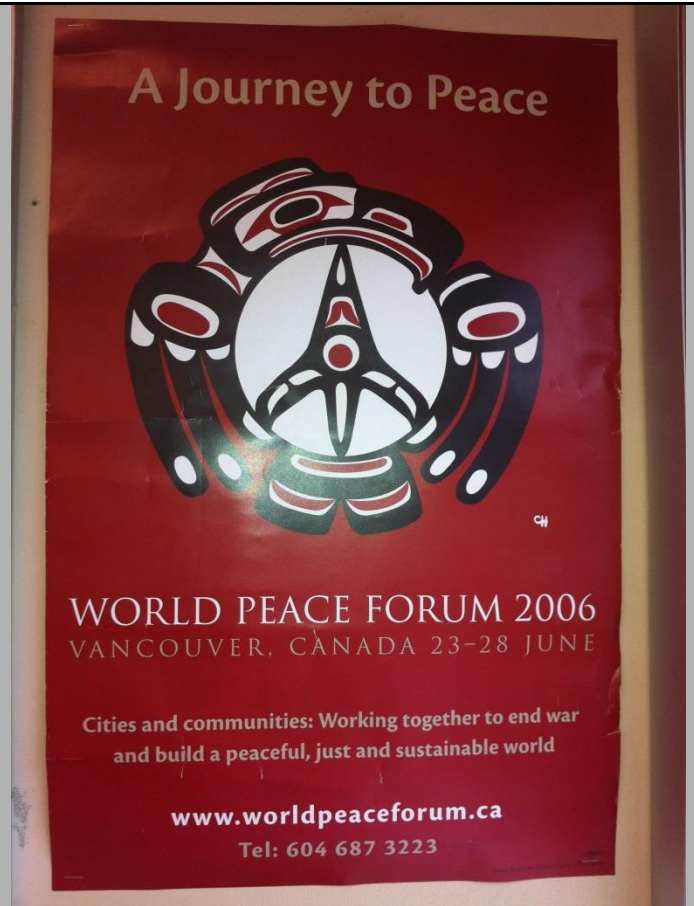
B.10



This was given to Stand4Peace for coordinating the Thirty Hour famine, a yearly event which we have sponsored many times.

B.11

B.12

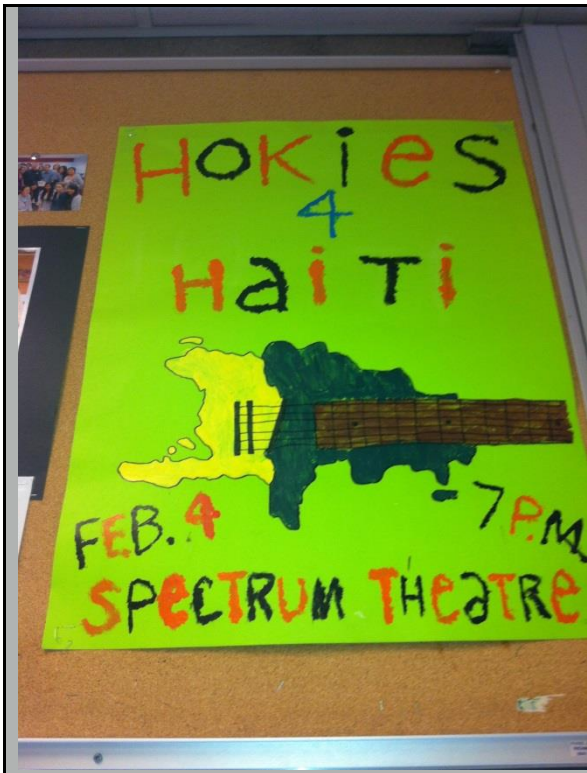


The plaque from Free the Children recognizing the successful completion of the Brick By Brick Campaign. That was an instance when we actually did achieve our goal. That is not always the case with social justice, nor should goal seeking necessarily be the objective in such a group.

This is a poster we have as a keepsake of our presentation there in Vancouver. While it was exciting to be there at UBC with some of the planet's peaceful intelligentsia, the attendance at our lecture was embarrassingly small. Here was a case for appreciating the stops along the way as opposed to only considering the destination to be important.

B.13

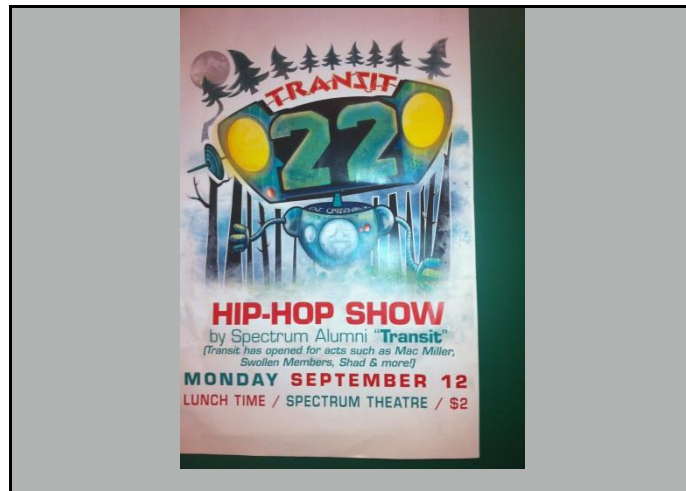
B.14



One of the handmade posters for the successful concert which raised thousands for the unfortunate victims of that natural disaster.

We partnered with World Vision on the Haiti relief project and received this recognition for our efforts.

B.15



Transit the prominent Canadian rapper is a proud Stand4Peace alumnus and has returned to help out the faithful with charity gigs such as the one shown on the poster.

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