

[\(See photos of previous week's junior class Dialogue experience\)](#)

Opening Inspiration

Live the Dream! Day

with Pinwheels for Peace

Tuesday afternoon, 31 March 2009
Mercy High School, Burlingame, California

Libby Traubman

Co-founder, Jewish-Palestinian Living Room Dialogue

In 1880 the British poet and philosopher Matthew Arnold said "If ever the world sees a time where women shall come together purely and simply for the benefit of humankind, it will be a power such as the world has never known."

Today these words are more important than ever compelling each one of us to ask ourselves: What must I do? Why me? What are my gifts?

Exactly 50 years ago, in 1959, I was a senior in high school in Indiana, ready to graduate. Things were very different then and I remember my mother telling me "it's a man's world!" I had a restricted view of the world and myself. I lacked self confidence.

Women didn't have the same opportunities in terms of profession and we were more limited in our choices - unlike today when you young women can be anything you choose if you are willing to work for it. I did go to college and became a social worker, one of the few professions more open to women 50 years ago.

It wasn't until I married Len in 1967 and moved to San Francisco that my world really opened up. The diversity of the Bay Area began to give me a more global perspective. In time I began to feel a real sense of responsibility and confidence that I could make a difference inspired by the bumper sticker "Think globally and act locally."

What you are doing here today, thinking about world peace, is very special and symbolic. This is more than a lovely gathering. It reminds and inspires us that we women are needed to build the world of our dreams. We must work side by side with men. We are the builders of relationships and capable of supporting a beautiful peaceful planet. We are the nurturers and caretakers of Life.

So Now is the time for you Mercy women and all women to come together purely and simply for the benefit of humankind. We will be a power such as the world has never known.

Nahida Salem

Palestinian participant, Jewish-Palestinian Living Room Dialogue

(Text of Nahida's spontaneous, inspiring address was not written.)

Len Traubman

Co-founder, Jewish-Palestinian Living Room Dialogue

A lot of people “want” peace but they don’t want relationships; but that cannot be.

In our experience, peace is about right relationships with each other and with our Earth into which you will plant and dedicate your pinwheels for peace shortly.

Three weeks ago in your Great Hall I saw peace happen in real life. I’ll never forget it or you of Mercy High.

In one class period, 120 Mercy scholars – your junior class – engaged face to face, to close the distance between themselves, and they modeled how human beings are capable of a new quality of listening to one another.

You at Mercy showed me your courage to share your life stories – your diverse cultures, strengths, fears, and dreams.

And you Mercy students demonstrated with power what humankind dearly needs to realize: an enemy is only one whose story we have not heard. Indeed, our personal stories are the shortest distance between us.

I saw the determination of you at Mercy to close the distance – move closer together beyond fear, beyond cliques and clans, beyond war to your dreamed-of life of familiarity and affection, living peace. This is your power to end war.

I was born in 1939, before World War II, before the Holocaust, in Duluth, northern Minnesota. One day in my pre-school years, walking by the synagogue I asked my grandmother: “Is everyone in Duluth Jewish?” I thought they were; it’s all I knew.

I’ve spent the rest of my life knowing my own story well but also listening and learning from those unlike myself and my people. It is the life I recommend to you and is described in this holiday card my wife recently gave me:

“The world in which you were born is just one model of reality. Other cultures are not failed attempts at being you. They are unique manifestations of the human spirit.”

Up the road from Duluth is Hibbing, Minnesota, where was born two years after me, Bobby Zimmerman, the son of other Jewish immigrants. You’d know him as Bob Dylan, who assured us that “the times they are a’changin’”. In another song he reminds us what’s important between people and nations:

“What good am I if I’m like all the rest; if I just turn away, when I see how you’re dressed; if I shut myself off so I can’t hear you cry; what good am I?”

I’ve seen how good you at Mercy are, with your will, skill, and courage to listen, and to tell your personal stories and be known. This act of sitting down with another human being and listening is the new power on Earth. It is no less than the beginning of the end of war.

When you plant them, see your pinwheels for peace listening to the wind and coming to life.

Alice Walker says: “Anything we love can be saved.” Make listening your way to love. You will do so much good. And you, Mercy women, will have your dreams and will have your world.