



Deliberative Dialogue

What does it take to build peace in a community?

An Interfaith Perspective

November 12, 2009

The Interfaith Dialogue convened several religious traditions from Los Angeles County to discuss the meaning of peace and peacebuilding within their respective denominations. The guests included: Salam Al-Mariyati, *Muslim Public Affairs Council*; Nirinjan Khalsa, *California Sikh Council*; Jonathan Freund, *Board of Rabbis*; Lori Kizzia, *Director of Peace and Justice at All-Saints Church*; Pastor Henry Johnson, *New Dawn Ministries*; Miguel Rivera, *Native American Lakota Tradition*; Rev. Ito Higashi, *Honganji Buddhist Temple*; Sharon Hardwick, *Spiritual Assembly of the Bahai's of Pasadena*.

Themes expressed in this session included goals of each of these religions to promote social harmony. Necessary steps for reaching this goal include letting go of anger, greed, and pride. The act of repairing relationships, taking responsibility for one's language and words, turning away from egocentricity, leading by example, converting enemies to friends, serving others, and working towards the goal of being "One" with humanity and other sentient beings were actions for building peace, expressed by the panel. Methods that can create peace within us include worship, prayer, and mediation.

Many panelists expressed that peacemaking and peacebuilding do not necessarily have to be religious or spiritual endeavors. Instead, it is a human undertaking wherein all mankind can participate. For this reason, doors between religious communities have to open to each other – now more than ever given the potential of nuclear conflagration and decimation of all life on the planet. Religious communities can serve social communities through actions such as feeding the hungry, uplifting those who are underserved, and acting without expectation of getting something. Panelists also included that all living things are our relatives, meaning that we can have such a connection with animals, nature, and the oceans.

This dialogue also left open the question, "Why is there so much conflict among and within religions." Several panelists and audience members expressed the desire to learn about other faiths, so that assumptions and ignorance do not lead to hatred, violence, and extremism. Such topics will be explored in a future Deliberative Dialogue.