



Issue number 2, March 2009

A note from Paula

Dear CONTACT Community,

Since you have been with us at CONTACT, no matter which year, there have been huge changes in our interconnected global life. The election of President Obama is a cause for celebration worldwide and a special moment of pride for Americans who have longed for such leadership for many years. We have high hopes for his years in office, yet are sobered by the economic crisis, the wars still waging, and the massive injustice that haunts our global community. There is much to be done, and hopefully out of the economic recession will come new will to change our way of life to conform to the needs of the planet and environment. We are all called to serve, and I think inspired to offer our best.

Here at the CONTACT office we are reading applications for the class of 2009, our 13th year. We are especially concerned with scholarships and budgets, due to the large number of applicants needing financial aid and the small amounts of scholarship help available. We hope you are encouraging colleagues to apply, and especially coaching them on ways to raise at least partial costs to cover their expenses and flights, as you did. You are the best recruiters we have, and you send us the most reliable candidates, so please continue to help fill our classes.

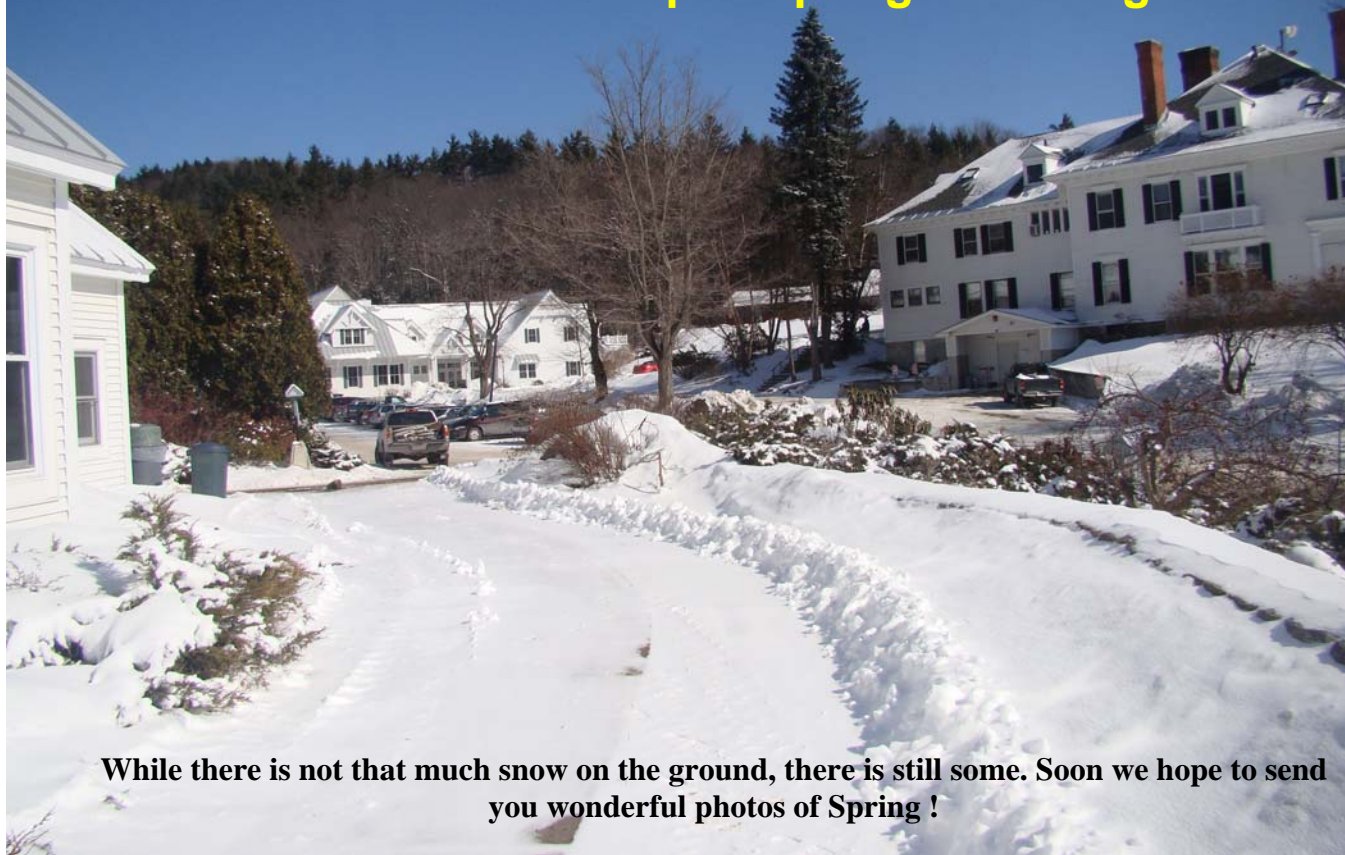
We have a new elective this year, called Women and Men as Partners in Peacebuilding. Those of you who are local can sign up for this course, or for Peacebuilding and Development or the Training for Change elective. We would be so pleased to see you again.

In the next newsletter I will be able to tell you about the experience of receiving the Unsung Hero of Compassion award from the Dalai Lama, which I will receive in California April 26 along with a group of others from around the world. Hopefully there will be photos for our website from the event.

I send you best wishes for peace and happiness.

Paula

From the SIT Campus-spring is coming !!!!!



While there is not that much snow on the ground, there is still some. Soon we hope to send you wonderful photos of Spring !

CONTACT Office

Both Mariana and Fatima are thrilled to E-meet lots of applicants from all over the world.

So far we have more than 100 applicants from about 30 countries.

We received inquiries this year from places we have not before: China, New Zealand and Lithuania.

These are incredible applicants with strong backgrounds and inspiring stories looking forward to learn and re-learn the ways of peacebuilding. Some of them are your colleagues, your friends and sometimes your family that come our way. Thank you for all that you've done and hope you will continue to support the program in whatever way you can. Warmly,
Mariana & Fatima

Graduate Institute

Well it is time to say Goodbye to our CONTACT MA students who are moving on in their Reflective phase.

Alhadi Hilal, Genet Hunegnaw, Nancy Swyers

Nancy is currently at Jewish Family Services in Springfield, MA working with the people there in providing support to refugees.

Margaret Tarmy, one more course to go and she is ready to start her internship (in addition to her full time job here at SIT).

Alhadi is soon on his way to Sudan where he will be conducting his practicum.

Genet is still on campus studying and is wonderful to see her around.

Good luck to all of you. See you at Graduation.

News from Kigali, Rwanda

Dear fellow peace builders,

This is my last night in Rwanda, the moon is full and so is my soul. I will miss my friends at Okapi and the warmth with which they have embraced me. I will also miss the friends I have made in Butare, Kigali and Winkwavu, and I hope someday to be back to speak, eat and dance with them once again.....

This journey has been all about being in the moment, accepting myself and those around me, listening quietly and intensely. Rwanda is so complex. It is hard to not be judgmental, yet it is so easy to admire its drive and creativity. Rwanda.....the perfect example that the darkest moment is just before the dawn.

I try hard to understand the impoverished people, children walking shoeless, diseased etched in their eyes and small bodies. Do they have big dreams, hope? Slums right down the street and hill from Okapi.....luxurious homes up on the hill overlooking the ghettos.....no freedom of speech as I understand and uphold.....injustice, complexity.....I try to understand as I try to understand my country.....

President Kagame at the soccer game, handsome and smiling, looking serious and sincere,I wonder what he thinks about what I think.....I wonder what he thinks about what Rosali thinks, a single mother with 6 children, working hard and never enough to feed them?

Who am I to judge Rwanda? Yet, who am I not to judge and be a voice for the voiceless? Rwanda is much more than meets the eye, the CSO's and NGO's and CBO's and government organizations.....Rwanda is also those who do not have a say, who are forgotten in far off and rural places, hungry, desolate, sad, and longing for a voice.....Rwanda is about gender, class, and race discrimination.....I wonder what Kagame thinks about what I think..... I wonder what he thinks about what his youth thinks who have shared much with me.

Rwanda is also about community and children waving and smiling with love and curiosity, and that is its gift to a world that sorely lacks this precious resource.....

Thousands of miles away from home I am reminded of our interconnectedness.....that the sufferings of others are my sufferings, that the victories of others are my victories.....and that I am as responsible for my happiness as I am for the wellbeing and happiness of others.

Peace,

Caridad



CONTACT Family

And we mean the small family, the unit that keeps all of us anchored in this world, our parents, grandparents, siblings and children. One will not be able to do the work that you do, without the love, understanding and support of the family.

Over the past few years few photos were shared on the list and that inspired me to bring it into this newsletter. In this newsletter we are featuring:



Manasvi Suvedi
Father: Mukti Suvedi, Nepal
CONTACT 2007



Bisrat A. Bisrat with his daughter ***Hannah***.
Bisrat currently lives in Boston with his family.
CONTACT 2007



Sopho Samushia and daughter
CONTACT 2005



Mrs & Mr. Kouihongbe

News from you

In the previous newsletter I asked you to submit news to be featured in the current newsletter. Here is a note from a CONTACT 2007 Alumna:

CONTACT family,



If you are concerned about the situation of the kids and adults in Gaza, Palestine you may live it and talk about it every minute it's not about sending emails to our brother Waheed it's more than that , it's a bout PEACE AND JUSTICE and if you are the people who really concerned about peace and justice then you have to rise up against all the killing, blood shed for all innocent people there. Waheed I'm with you all the time in my spirit and my feelings, if you check this link below you will see that's how I did celebrate 2009 I asked all my friends to wear black and be aware about the situation in Gaza and we didn't forget about your people who suffer there, we didn't have fun and just came together to enjoy the new year , we are real people who care about peace, social change and justice.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BeJ6RqjUEfw&>

Zahra AlKabi

Director and Founder

www.saverefugees.org

Zahra also sent us her calendar that I am attaching separately.

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