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PEAC 550-01: Service Learning Peace

Spring 2019

My Journey with Volunteers of America

Volunteers of America (VOA) and Their Mission

It is a common occurrence that the lower-class, disabled, and diseased are neglected and overlooked within a community. They are valued as unimportant, helpless, and draining to a community, so they are forgotten and mistreated. Volunteers of America's goal is to rid these ideas from its community and meet the needs of the members in their community. VOA is a non-profit organization that helps to promote positive change to individuals and their communities. Established in 1896, VOA has been dedicated to uplifting those in their direct community and the people of America. With over 40 services, their goals are to support veterans, families and older seniors through housing programs, provide addiction recovery programs for men and women, provide services for those with disabilities so they can live a more self-sufficient lifestyle, and provide HIV testing, safety kits and educational programs for the wide variety of clients.

VOA currently has several locations here in Louisville that provide a wide variety of human services. Many of their services as mentioned before are dedicated to helping people create a more stable life style so that they can give back to their community. A huge part of their services involves helping the homeless in Louisville with an emphasis on housing families with children first. Jacob Ryan is a reporter for the Kentucky Center for Investigative Reporting who reports that, "Some 6,300 people lived in shelters or on the streets across the city in 2016,

according to the most recent homeless census” (Ryan, 2016). Roughly, 1000 of these people are children and about 3000 of them are living with disabilities both mental and physical. This number has only risen since 2016. VOA’s Emergency Family Shelter has the capacity to house roughly 23 families. They provide weekly educational and life skill classes that promote the development of effective communication, access to affordable housing, self-care, learning tools for pursuing education, conflict management, budgeting knowledge, and many other life lessons necessary to becoming a contributing member of society.

VOA not only wants to provide support for the homeless, but they also want to provide the kind of support that allows their clients to live a relatively typical life. They celebrate holidays, birthdays, and even have a program that allows kids to remain at the school they were at before their family became homeless. The goal is maintaining a stability in the lives of the adults and families there. VOA has teamed up with the bus system in Jefferson County so that the kids are able to be transported any where in the city to stay at the same school. This reduces the overall stress placed on the family in a crisis situation.

Another service VOA provides to the members of Louisville’s community are their addiction recovery centers. According to The Office of Drug Control Policy, “Addiction has reached epidemic levels in Kentucky, where painkiller and heroin abuse are rampant” (The Heroin - Fentanyl Epidemic, 2017). VOA has a goal to end addiction. This goal seems more difficult to achieve than not, but then again the concept of building peace and maintaining that peace is a difficult idea to conceptualize too. But there can be no peace, no justice, no end to addiction, unless someone strives for it.

VOA has taken it upon themselves and their mission to be the ones to step up and help aid in the fight against addiction within their community. It is common for people to judge those

who are addicted to a drug or something else. People can place blame on someone for having the disease of addiction instead of understanding the cause. VOA's mission is not to judge, but to understand and provide relief for those suffering from an addiction. They have separate recovery programs for men, women and even pregnant women who require more medical support. Not only does VOA provide a full recovery program, they also provide transitional living homes for those transitioning back into the community as a self-sustaining citizen.

Many miscellaneous services like their educational programs are exclusively provided through the housing and recovery programs they offer. However, HIV testing, HIV safety kits, and safety-sex kits are available to the public free of charge. You can schedule an appointment on their website at any time to gain access to these services. VOA wants to promote safe sex and hopefully reduce the transmission of diseases through unsafe sex and drug use. VOA provides HIV safety kits that include new needles, the essential equipment to use drugs safely, and information on where they can find access to recovery and support. This is a highly controversial and sensitive subject among members of the community and those within VOA's organization.

There is a disagreement as to whether the reduction of sexual disease transference is worth the cost of possible higher drug usage. On the contrary, the opposite argument is that people will find a way to use drugs, so using them in the safest possible way is a preferable alternative to the cost of sexual disease transference and the medical bills that would result thereafter. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse,

“One of the best available strategies for reducing the spread of HIV among drug users is syringe-exchange programs (also called syringe service programs); their effectiveness has been proven through abundant research. When syringe exchange was finally implemented in southern Indiana last year, for instance, it was a major factor in

bringing the HIV outbreak in Scott County under control. But while the science of how to prevent HIV transmission is solid, misconceptions about these programs have prevented wider implementation and limited their public health impact” (Volkow, 2016).

Sometimes it is difficult to decide which consequence is the lesser evil. Not many people are willing to provide such a controversial service to their community. But VOA saw a need in their community, and they were brave enough to meet that demand despite the backlash.

My Responsibilities

Study Buddies

Study Buddies is a weekly program at VOA’s Emergency Family Shelter provided for the kids who live there. Monday through Thursday the children have access to tutors consisting of JCPS teachers and volunteers who teach them efficient ways to complete their homework and other tasks assigned to them. The guidance provided to the youth is important to their development of certain life skills. Once finished with their homework, they work on other educational assignments or play games designed to instill active participation in their learning abilities and social connections among their own age groups and others.

Teachers and volunteers want these kids to develop a passion for their knowledge so they will further pursue their education. By helping kids understand their homework and the different methods to accomplishing they are developing a reservoir of tools that can be used later to accomplish even more difficult tasks assigned to them. Developing skills to accomplish tasks are essential in learning how to develop skills to understand and resolve conflict. In order to understand conflict and strive for a peaceful resolution involves having the tools to analyze the various situations that occur in life. Study Buddies not only strives to further kids education, but also the life skills necessary to live a sustaining and meaningful life.

PATHS

PATHS is an acronym for People Aspiring Towards Healing through Spirituality.

PATHS meets once a week at the Shelby Recovery Center for men. These are male clients who were recently incarcerated or recovering from addiction. Spirituality is all about connecting with the human spirit or soul. Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat state that, “Peace is built on the foundations of other spiritual practices: connections, compassion, justice, unity. It is a goal of all spiritual people. Peace is an inner state of well-being and calm. It is also an outer project of promoting nonviolence, conflict resolution, and cooperation in the world” (Spiritual Practices, Peace, 2019). Part of practicing spirituality is centering the self and learning how to love, forgive, and accept yourself and those around you. These are traits/skills required when spreading and building peace in your community and outside of it.

Chop & Chat

Chop & Chat is a group of a recovering mothers living in one of VOA's transitional Freedom Homes. Once a week, they come together for a chop and chat/group therapy session. With a hands-on effort the mothers create a shared meal. Then afterwards they discuss a topic or issue of the week. Volunteers come in to hold or play with their children while the group talks. It is a great way for the women to step away and re-center themselves.

One of my tasks for these women was to talk about inner peace with them and ways they could attain a peaceful and centered self. I believe the group discussion we had was a success. The women were engaged in what I was saying, and I really felt I was able to provide them with skills to gain a deeper peace of mind. They even came up with ideas I had not thought about as well. This was essential to my service learning because I was assisting these ladies in developing their own peace to share with the world once they transitioned back into the

community. Most of these women did not have many chances to begin with. The communities these women have known are often violent or unequal in a socioeconomic standpoint which led these women to turn to drugs in the first place. This is something the women have told me first hand during my time with them. This past semester has shown me how privileged of a background I come from.

Teens with Purpose (TWP)

Teens with Purpose is a group that meets weekly and provides a wide variety of opportunities for the teens who live at the Emergency Family Shelter. One goal for VOA is to end the homeless cycle for people in Louisville. Teens living in a homeless shelter are already at a socioeconomic disadvantage of finding opportunities to pursue after high school and thus more likely to fall victim to the cycle of homelessness. Teens with Purpose provides teens with access to further their future and education by learning how to apply for college or trade school, look for scholarships, build a resume, or simply work on life skills.

Some weeks TWP will bring in a professional from some occupation to talk with the teens. The goal is to discuss what is involved to work in said occupation. We talk about the education involved, where you can go for the education, and what the job is like daily. This provides the opportunity for teens to learn about occupations they may not have thought of before. TWP also wants to add more fun into the teens lives because living in a homeless shelter can be difficult when there is not much to do. Some of the activities include video game nights, movie nights, and even going to a trampoline park.

Miscellaneous Activities

The main activities I was a part of are the top four mentioned, but there were a few days when I was needed by VOA to step in and help with miscellaneous service-learning

opportunities. On one occasion another volunteer and I supervised over 60 volunteers who wanted to have a "reverse spring break" experience. The volunteers were students from Northern Iowa University and Iowa University. The idea of a "reverse spring break" experience is for the students to spend the week traveling to cities performing service-learning deeds at various organizations.

This was the first time I was in put in charge of volunteers, so I was nervous. But it went extremely well. Between all the volunteers they were able to sort over 100 lbs of bread, prepare two meals, clean the place top to bottom, interact with all the people in the shelter, and assemble a variety of health kits like their HIV-safety kits and safe sex kits. The students asked a lot of questions about VOA and how it operates. VOA provides a variety of services that ensure the safety and healing services for homeless people and those with addictions. I was able to talk to them about the addiction problem we have here in Louisville, and how it affects our community.

I believe it was an eye opener for some of them. Realizing there is a problem is the first step to fixing it. VOA's goal is to rehabilitate and reintroduce people back into the community as productive citizens. This is essential to having a community that can promote peacebuilding. When people are forgotten or mistreated it creates a weight that prevents positivity from occurring. Being able to talk about the services VOA has and all its success is important because they can take these ideas elsewhere to help other people in need as well.

Another miscellaneous opportunity VOA is new to partner with is Beaded Treasures of Louisville. Beaded Treasures is a locally founded business that strives to provide refugee women with entrepreneur skills through jewelry making. They use a system called microcredit that allows the women to obtain the materials in advanced to create products They pay back the cost of the materials once they have sold the jewelry. The women phase out of the program once they

have gained enough skills to produce and sell jewelry or other products on their own. These women sell their jewelry at local events and art fairs around town. Recently, Beaded Treasures just had new grand opening for their new store after they partnered with VOA.

Surehka, the Founder of Beaded Treasures fell in love with jewelry making when she was in India on a trip to see family. She began teaching a small class on jewelry making at Jefferson Community College while also volunteering at Kentucky's Refugee Ministries. She encountered a few women trying to market their jewelry and she had the idea to host a house party for the women. Within an hour the women had sold over 1000 dollars' worth of jewelry. Surehka officially founded Beaded Treasures in 2011 and it has been growing ever since.

Learning how to be your own entrepreneur gives these women a new method of gaining an income. Hearing the stories of the families in VOA's homeless shelter has shown me that many times these families have turned to selling drugs or their bodies to make money. These are violent and dangerous ways to financially support themselves and their families. Beaded Treasures is creating an outlet for these women to pull their families away from those methods of making money that could be harmful. Surehka founded the program in hopes that she could ensure security for these women, support broad based education, and protect the human rights of refugee women. Surehka truly is an inspiring woman for creating this sustainable program for refugee women.

Difficulties and Opportunities

Study Buddies

I have had to break up fights more times than I can count this past semester, but I have always tried to not only end the violence, but to also resolve the issue too. The kids come from the lower end of the socioeconomic ladder in Louisville. They have had less opportunities than

myself and many people I know. The way they were raised often taught them to resort to violence or other negative techniques to resolve conflicts in their lives. They do not have access to any other forms of resolution, or they were not taught how to effectively communicate and work through a conflict. I have noticed that I have been able to practice mediation skills when interacting with these kids because of this.

Sometimes, I felt like my efforts were hopeless, but I did have some success. Many of the kids that were at the shelter in January have since moved away, so I was not able to connect with some of them. However, there is a small group of kids at the shelter that I feel I have really connected with this semester. I have noticed a change in how we interact with one another now compared with in January. At first these kids had a hard time listening to me and behaving for me. However, throughout my service-learning experience I feel I have been able to understand them and learn how to avoid conflict with them or resolve the conflict when it does occur. It was difficult to understand how to relate to them at first, but I slowly began to gain their trust.

Now they listen to me, and I have noticed that when I am around they will resort to other means of conflict management I have taught them instead of violence. This has given me the opportunity to instill more conflict management skills in them so that they can use them not only with me, but others as well. Conflict management skills are important to the development of these kids because conflicts are unavoidable and knowing how to manage them are essential life skills to have to be a productive human being.

I was able to take skills that Kolby taught me from her experiences at USPIRITUS in her conflict analysis from PEAC325. She had a kid that she was unable to connect with. She used rewards, negotiation, and other various forms of conflict management to gain the child's trust so that she could help him with his homework and other tasks. Unlike, Kolby I had a little more

success with my kids in gaining their trust, but I do not believe it was because I did anything better or different. I think we had different results due to the kids' ability to trust. Kolby's kid came from a broken family and he was essentially alone much of the time. In the shelter there is a higher sense of community and I think this contributed to the waterfall effect of gaining the kids trust. Once I gained one, it seemed the others followed suit.

PATHS

The main difficulty for our PATHS group stayed consistent across all the sessions we were able to have. That difficulty was the amount of attention and interest the men had for the group. When I began my service-learning project at VOA, PATHS was brand new. Greg, an intern for my service-learning supervisor, was placed in charge of leading the group with my assistance when necessary. I worked along with Greg in many of the activities I participated in this semester, so we were able to build a good bond with one another.

This was beneficial in creating PATHS because there was much trial and error before we were able to feel we had accomplished anything. Our difficulties involved the fact that we held the group on Tuesday evenings which were the men's longest day at the recovery center throughout the week. They are in classes from 7 am until 9pm (the end of PATHS) with one hour for lunch in between on Tuesdays.

Initially the class was mandatory for the entire recovery center. This turned out to be a poor idea because there are over 60 men in the shelter. We quickly figured out that having that many inattentive participants was distracting the learning of other members who cared about the topics we were sharing. We then decided to change the class into a rotational system where different groups of men came each week. This ended up working out to an extent, but what Greg

and I wanted to do was to allow the class to be optional to everyone, every week. This way, only the men who wanted to learn about spirituality would come.

The idea behind the rotation system was created so that all the men could benefit from the class. As part of their rehab program they must attend so many classes and PATHS counts towards those. On the contrary, the rotation system led to having men in the group who were an inhibitor to the other group members learning. They would do this in the form of talking in the background, or worse talking over everyone about whatever they wanted to talk about.

Chop & Chat

Many of the difficulties I faced during Chop & Chat sessions were the distractions from the kids. When I led group with the mothers, the children caused distractions in various forms. The most common distractors were children needing their mothers for a diaper change, feeding time, or consoling a crying baby. Other distractors were the lack of concentration and energy towards the group session by the mothers.

The first of two group sessions I led had a greater impact than the second. The topic was Inner Peace and how to practice it. We discussed what peace can mean for certain individuals and how to build peace within ourselves through journaling, meditating, reading etc. They were engaged and we ended the group speaking of the importance of finding peace within ourselves so that we can spread that peace to our in-groups and out-groups.

The second group session I had the privilege of directing was centered around conflict resolution and conflict management. This session had difficulties that were unforeseen to me at the time. The day of the session, the weather was nice for the first time in a while, so we had group outside on the playground with the children. Normally the children are kept in another room (if they will stay there). So, naturally there were many distractions that day while I was

talking. I do feel I made the best out of the opportunity given to me, but I wish I would have been able to focus more on what I was trying to talk to the women about. After the group session was done and I had left, I realized a huge chunk of information that I had been unable to recall during the time we had due to the distraction of kids playing on a playground ten feet away from us.

Teens with Purpose (TWP)

TWP gave me difficulties and opportunities in the fact that I was always attempting to manage between conflicts the teens had. It was quite common for me to spend the entire hour we had weekly, just trying to mediate between two or more of the teens. An example of the worst night I had with them, was when I was supposed to be discussing conflict resolution with the teens. Instead of discussing how to resolve conflict, conflict was being created the whole time. Part of this was due to another difficulty we were experiencing at the shelter at the time.

That impediment was the lack of teens (13yr and up) in the shelter at the time. The number fluctuates with the different families there. During this TWP, we tried to let some of the younger kids participate (ages 9-12). This turned out to be a lose-lose situation because the kids were a bit too young to comprehend many of the concepts I was teaching them. We try to make the classes interesting by playing bingo with words I say during the hour so they can win prizes and listen to what we say more effectively. However, even this technique did not help the younger kids stay focused on the topic at hand.

I had another volunteer with me this night who helped me maintain control over the group, but it was not without conflict. We ended up having to end the session early, and that was the end of having kids younger than 13 in TWP. And although this night specifically did not go as planned, there were many times when I was able to help the kids defuse conflicts between one

another through various forms of conflict management such as negotiation, compromise, or simple effective communication.

Miscellaneous Activities

Many of the miscellaneous activities I participated in were asked of me because they needed extra volunteers to help promote VOA's mission, or to help guide their newer volunteers in what to do. I believe I was able to take advantage of these times because not only was I able to inform people of the need VOA is providing for their community, but I was also able to tell them why I was involved and what I was representing by being there.

I was able to talk with high school students, college students from various universities, clients from VOA, and various other partners and leaders that VOA has connected with about the Peace Justice and Conflict Resolution program at the University of Louisville that has exploded over the last couple years. Many of the concepts I shared with them they had either not heard of or were familiar with but wanted to know more. While the direct services provided those days may have had little to do with the purpose of my service-learning, I do believe I was able to fill my time fully by devoting it to spreading information to others who may have a similar passion of helping others.

The Call of Service

When I started my service-learning project, I found myself asking "What am I doing here" how does this possibly relate to my studies on conflict resolution and peacebuilding abilities. I find myself struggling with a similar question that Robert Coles experienced as an undergraduate student in part of his book called *The Call of Service: A Witness to Idealism*. He tells a story in his chapter on *Young Idealism* about an eleven-year-old boy named Billy he had been tutoring. One day Billy asked why Coles came and volunteered, but Coles did not really

have an answer. Coles states that his answer to this question has changed and evolved over time, and I think my answer has too since day one compared to now.

Coles has dedicated his life to humanistic work for those in American who need it. Part of PEAC studies is protecting the humanistic rights of those in our community. When I first began my service at VOA I was unaware of the variety of services that protected basic human rights of the clients they served. Providing housing, food, access to healthcare, job security and a whole plethora of other services all work together to ensure that peacebuilding in various forms is occurring within their community. I was a part of this, and I was proud to be.

Coles includes a variety of people to make comments within his book and one that caught my attention was made by Dion Diamond who says, "You [I] were a part of something much bigger than yourself, and you saw people beginning to change, right before your eyes, and that was the real achievement" (Coles, p. 70). I am not sure of the extent to which I helped the clients directly, but I was able to see a change within the clients throughout these few months that VOA provided for them. I have watched as the kids from the shelter have advanced their education and acquired skills to better manage their conflicts through skills I have taught them. I have listened to mothers and refugees discuss how they have overcome the violence of drugs and other outside factors in their lives to create a stable and peaceful future for their children. I have heard the words of recovering men and those previously incarcerated talk about how they want to extinguish the violence and hatred they hold for themselves and those around them.

All the stories I have acquired over the semester has opened my eyes to the people in our community that I have overlooked and the greater need there is for peacebuilding. We have polarized ourselves and created a 'them' and an 'us' on a socioeconomic scale. It has opened my eyes to the violence and conflict within our community. We have a huge drug addiction and

homelessness problem in our city that is widely ignored by those higher up on the socioeconomic scale. VOA is answering the call of service to resolve this conflict. They strive to end the cycle that causes these problems and want to improve the quality of lives for those in our community. When a community is assimilated and strong, they can create a wider impact on communities around them to create a world with an abundance of peacebuilding.

PEAC 325 & 350

During one of the Chop and Chat sessions, I had the privilege of discussing conflict resolution. Being a mother, they face many conflicts in raising their children. Their addictions also create a conflict in maintaining healthy lifestyles. Conflicts are inevitable for humans, and especially for these Mothers. They have many variable causing conflicts. Therefore, I think learning how to manage conflict is beneficial for them to create a stable environment for themselves and their kids. I discussed how conflict is two parties striving towards different goals. Conflicts can also be civil. It is often emotion that causes them to become violent or end in lose-lose outcomes instead of win-win.

I informed the ladies of five different conflict resolution strategies that I learned about in PEAC 350. These are avoiding, competing, accommodating, collaborating, and compromising. They are placed on scale of assertiveness and cooperativeness. We discussed the positive and negatives of each strategy and discussed when each strategy would be appropriate to use in their lives for different situations.

Conflict is a driving component in life. It can have positive consequences. According to *The Little Book of Conflict Transformation*, by, John Paul Lederach, "Conflict also creates life: through conflict we respond, innovate, and change. Conflict can be understood as the motor of change, that which keeps relationships and social structures honest, alive, and dynamically

responsive to human needs, aspirations, and growth” (Lederach, p. 18). Understanding how to handle conflicts in our lives is extremely important in creating positive outcomes. There are many types of conflicts, and it is helpful to have different strategies to deal with each unique conflict. When you do not know how to handle a conflict it can create more. Therefore, learning conflict management is an inevitable and essential skill to learn in life.

Psychology of Diversity

What is Psychology of Diversity? In a quick summary psychology of diversity is rooted in the fact that all people are sensitive to differences. We readily perceive and act on differences in everyday situations. Negative associations often exist even if negative conceptualizations are explicitly rejected. Psychologists have typically focused on how people are similar, but recent scientific studies have analyzed: 1. The origins of diversity (i.e., why people differ), 2) perceptions of diversity (i.e., why we “see” some differences but not others) and 3) the effects of diversity. (Powerpoint provided by Dr. Keith Lye)

Differences are often subjective in opinion not objective. Yes, there are some obvious differences among people, but essentially differences are psychologically constructed. People’s ability to psychologically construct difference is so great, they can do it even when evaluating two groups that are, objectively, 100% the same. Evidence for this comes from a procedure originally developed by Hamilton and Gifford (1976). In Hamilton & Gifford’s procedure, people consistently developed a more negative opinion of the minority group than the majority group for no rationally defensible reason. 100% similar groups with equally proportional negative and positive traits placed against one another produced different results when one group was smaller than the other.

The procedure induces what is termed as illusory correlation. An illusory correlation is the act of developing a relationship between two things when there is in fact no relationship between the two variables. Information that is negative or false carries undue weight in people's opinion formation about minority groups. This is highly problematic because there will almost surely be negative information associated with any sort of minority group. The same goes for majority groups, but apparently there is a subjective variable that causes minority groups to be perceived as more different even though they are identical to the majority.

Another negative consequence of perceiving minority groups or individuals as different is the polarization that occurs between groups once differences are established. Affiliating with certain types of people but not others has detrimental consequences to developing ideas of differences about people. Once differences are established we begin to assume biases about certain people and look for evidence that confirms and strengthens these biases. This is a term called confirmation bias. Confirmation bias plays a huge role in the influence of polarization between opposing groups. When groups avoid interaction among diverse groups their processing fluency weakens for things that are different and strengthens for things that are similar.

Our processing fluency is our ability to process things and people that are similar and dissimilar. When we only nurture our processing fluency for a few types of situations or groups of people our processing fluency for foreign information decays. This makes it easier to look for information that strengthens our beliefs about the differences we have created.

So, what does this have to do with my service-learning and Peace Justice and Conflict Transformation. As mentioned, certain groups of people can be forgotten and neglected within communities. VOA has taken it upon themselves to highlight the forgotten members of their community that so many people ignore. But as mentioned, when we have little interaction with

those that are different than us, then our processing fluency for those groups becomes weak and withdrawal from new ideas. The illusory correlations we have created for the stereotypes associated with the homeless, diseased, and forgotten intensify as we polarize ourselves further from those that are different than ourselves and this causes conflicts for VOA to gain support from its community.

How can we expect to strengthen our community unless all its members are contributing to its well-being? Therefore, it is up to the other members in the community to make sure everyone is working to uplift those around them to create a more unified society. When a community is working together and ignoring the factors that make us diverse, we begin to process the factors that make us alike. Through this positive change in the outlooks of people that are different we can create a society that not only views people as more alike than different, but we will create a society that also accepts those differences. Accepting those differences is key in assimilating a community to strengthen it. (The information about Psychology of Diversity comes from PowerPoints provided by Dr. Keith Lyle from the Psychological and Brain Sciences Department at the University of Louisville, Links to PowerPoints provided in reference page)

Contributions to Academic and Professional Career

Beginning this semester, I was unsure of what I wanted to pursue after graduation. After spending time with the kids from the shelter it has become obvious to me that I want to pursue a career in education. This has always been one of my options, but I had a difficult time contemplating if I was certain on that course. I have studied Spanish during my time at the University and teaching English in a foreign Spanish speaking country has been a goal I hope to achieve as well.

Focusing on minority groups has become a passion of mine. I know that if I am not helping people I am not satisfied with my work. I believe that is a core concept that is instilled in the students of the PEAC program at Louisville. We are servants to our community and world striving to make the world more peaceful with people equipped with conflict management skills. Conflict is inevitable, but with the right tools, almost all conflicts can be resolved peacefully.

My wish, during my lifetime, is to connect diverse groups through education. Gaining experience in teaching in other countries as well as my own will give me the skill set necessary to integrate diverse groups. Assimilating minorities into the majority creates a unified community and world. I may only be able to affect individuals, but my hope is that those individuals will pass on the conflict management and peacebuilding skills I give to them.

I am applying for a master's program in Education this fall. During my time I hope to gain experience by traveling to teach in diverse areas of the world. I want to aid in future generations education so that they can take care of the world properly. There is much violence and conflict in the world that needs to be resolved in order to build peace. The new generations need to be equipped to handle these factors, and that is the call of service I hope to fulfill in the world.

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