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**WITH THIS ISSUE:**

Just released, the invitation brochure to next year's conference for the Australian and Asia-Pacific region, to take place in Sydney, with the theme:

**'Together we can make**

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## One year after September 11th...

In a few days the media will be full of the first anniversary of September 11th – the day that "changed the world".

Or did it? That suggestion was hotly contested by some at an international meeting of MRA-IC in India last January. The Kenyans pointed to the bomb blast that tore through Nairobi. Indians feel they have been confronting terrorism in Kashmir for years. And look at the Middle East, someone from Lebanon cried.

Yet undoubtedly the world has shifted since terrorism struck at the heart of America. The consequences of that event grow as we face the possibility of renewed war, one year later. It was "an attack on all of humanity, not just the United States," said the 35 participants of a Political Round Table in their statement during the final days of this year's conferences in Caux, Switzerland.

Over six weeks during July-August 1,450 people came to Caux for the international conferences under the theme "*Globalizing responsibility for human security*".

The world situation was at the forefront of everyone's concerns. "Any assertion that there is generalized hatred between Muslims and the West is fundamentally wrong," said the Round Table politicians and diplomats, from countries as far apart as Serbia and America, Pakistan and Poland, Jamaica and Japan.

Three weeks earlier a dialogue on "Peace, justice and faith" had brought together 39 "concerned Muslims and non-Muslims" – scholars, professionals, clerics – invited by HRH Prince El Hassan of Jordan, Professor Rajmohan Gandhi of India and Dr Cornelio Sommaruga, the Swiss president of Caux-Initiatives of Change.

The meeting condemned terrorism "in all its forms" and the use of religion to justify violence. They urged that "democratization should be promoted within each country in the Muslim world" and, pointedly, "also in the world power structure." Islam "is not incompatible with modernity. What is needed is to create spaces for the expressions and explanations of Islam within modern society... There can be no peace among nations and religions without dialogue."

### **Mortal dangers**

Dialogue – it seems almost too obvious even to say it. "Jaw, jaw" has always been better than "war, war". The critical question is how to create the dialogue, to make it deep enough and inclusive enough? A Muslim Imam referred back to Frank Buchman's challenge in 1946: "You cannot build Europe without the Germans". And then said, "We cannot build peace without the Jews."

Caux has a long tradition of creating such dialogues. They take place informally, over meals and late at night as much as during sessions. A Somali leader spoke of how at Caux he and his political opponent had experienced "a meeting of minds, really a miracle". A senior churchman admitted that in 40 years, this was the first time that he had met an Imam. "Our religions are not meant to divide

us," he said. "With the help of His grace, we manage to change. So why not the world?"

Another "round table" earlier in August drew 50 Africans from the war-torn "Great Lakes" nations of Congo, Burundi and Rwanda. A cabinet minister was seen serving his "enemy" at breakfast. Two men from opposite sides drove to Geneva, discussing all the way what they could do to advance the peace talks.

In the view of the president of the World Conference of Religions for Peace Edy Korthals Altes, it will take this sort of "fundamental change of attitude, a real change of heart" to avert the mortal danger our world faces. A new concept of security should be based on "actively pursuing policies leading to a just and durable peace".

A former Republican member of the US House of Representatives saw the same urgent need for non-military responses to terrorism. "Peace is not just the absence of war," said Arlen Erdahl from Minnesota, "but the absence of the conditions that spawn war – the poverty, the hopelessness." With him was an African politician at the sharp end of that challenge. Osman Jama Ali is the deputy Prime Minister in the transitional government of Somalia. "Many people my age have to accept that they have a share in the disasters that have overtaken our countries," he said, admitting that for many "access to power means access to resources for personal benefit." He had apologised for the mistakes he had made as a Cabinet Minister in a former government.

The offering and acceptance of apologies is "one of the most profound interactions of civilised people," said professor of Psychiatry at the University of Massachusetts, USA, Aaron Lazare. Citing many powerful examples of apology, he said, "War is the least attractive option for resolving conflict. International cooperation requires apology and forgiveness." (*See more of his speech on page 5*).

### **So simple**

At this critical moment, at this anniversary, all these components – dialogue, apology and forgiveness, tackling the causes of terrorism and conflict – are surely needed.

And something more. As a Sydney social worker found, the one thing she learnt about being a peace-maker was that, rather than blaming others, "change starts with me". So simple we miss it. Four days after September 11th this year comes Yom Kippur, the "day of repentance", when millions will pray: "Who among us is righteous enough to say: 'I have not sinned?' We sin against You when we sin against ourselves..."

In a similar way millions of Muslims pray every day "in the name of God, most Gracious, most Merciful... Thine aid do we seek... Show us the straight way... the way of those on whom Thou has bestowed Thy Grace, those whose portion is not wrath..."

What is our prayer?

– Mike Brown, Adelaide

## **An important job to do**

*Aboriginal songwriter and performer, Johnny Huckle, contributed at the "Connecting communities for reconciliation and justice" session in July, along with secretary of the National Sorry Day, John Bond. Together they showed the documentary "Rabbit-Proof Fence" several times. Johnny told his story and sang his songs, including one written especially for Caux. "The Americans are powerfully affected by the Australian experience," wrote one urban activist from Richmond, Virginia.*

At first I was overwhelmed by the stories of hardship I heard in Caux. Then a British person told me of his struggle to come to terms with the wrongs of his own country. This gave me the courage to tell my own story.

I grew up in western New South Wales, in a racist town. If an Aboriginal man tried to have a beer in a pub, the police would drag him out and sometimes beat him up. When one of their victims was found dead in the river, we didn't believe the police reports that he had drowned.

Some of our men took out their anger and frustration on their families. When my father came home drunk, we all fled. My mother endured a lot. She had a tough life, ever since she was removed from her family as a child and sent to Cootamundra Girls' Home.

At primary school I was chased out of the schoolyard by kids yelling "darkie", and from then on race was always a big issue for me. I was born with "chalky bones", and for my first 17 years was continually in and out of hospital. Eventually I had to go to a hospital in Sydney. For the first time I met white people who never treated

me differently because of the colour of my skin.

I developed a reverse racism. I despised white people, and hated the white side of me because it represented the conquerors of this land. I took revenge by ripping off the system at every opportunity. That led to other forms of stealing. I began to drink, and before long was an alcoholic. I felt ashamed of myself.

One day I was so drunk I went home to sleep it off. That night I had a dream. I saw many of my Wiradjuri people looking at me. Then two spirits came tumbling out of the sky. They gave me a message: "Johnny, you have to stop the wrong ways you are living. You have an important job to do."

I couldn't stop thinking about this dream. It started me on the path to

giving up alcohol, and finding honesty and integrity in my life.

Soon after that I teamed up with Helen, a stolen generations woman. When we decided to launch the Journey of Healing, the old ones came to her in a dream, and told her to write a song for the Journey. We wrote it together. Later we took a "Journey of Healing" music tour to every state of Australia.

At Caux, I wrote a song for the "house of the world":

*Man has conquered for thousands of years  
Left us drowning in floods of tears  
From pain and suffering we've all endured  
In time will these ways ever be cured?  
Or must this always be?  
Like the wind and the sea  
Conflict, conflict, conflict*

*Welcome to the house of the world  
The people's house in Switzerland  
Where we've come to embrace  
The human face  
In a gesture of peace and love.*

## **Peace-building... where to start?**

*Trish McDonald-Harrison works with City Mission World Association in Sydney. She attended the "Peace-building initiatives" conference in August:*

I went to the Caux Conference thinking I wanted to contribute in some way to peace-building. But there seemed too much that needed to be done. I was overwhelmed. What could I hope to achieve?

But then I gained some important insights. Firstly, that peace-building can take many forms and is not as difficult as I thought. For example:

- a) To give a smile to a person of another culture can make a connection even without words;
- b) Rather than simply taking what is written in the newspaper at face value, I could take the trouble to research some issues for myself.

I was challenged by the question: "When two parties are at fault, who should apologise first?" The answer I found was: "The one with the most courage."

From Conference participants, I learned of their experience of changing the course of a conflict by having the courage to acknowledge their own faults:

- One aged man told of 40 years of personal pain, caused by his father who had always been critical of him. The man eventually realised that he had something to apologise about to his father. When he apologised to his father for his anger, harbored over years, his father melted in tears of remorse, and asked his son's forgiveness and the forgiveness of each member of the family.
- Irene Laure, fought in the French Resistance and her son was tortured during World War II. After a time of anguish and soul searching, she apologised to the Germans for her hatred of them. Her actions were significant in rebuilding post-War relations in Europe.

The other important thing I learned is that change needs to start with me. This can be done by taking the time to be quiet with God each day to seek His guidance as to how I can be a peace-builder.

Celebration of 100 years of Mountain House and the affirmation of its historic healing role over 56 years by local Swiss civic and government authorities marked the start of the summer conferences.

The history of the building was recognised: from luxury hotel to refugee camp to international centre for the conferences of MRA-IC. Some 600 local people flocked in for an open afternoon alongside conference participants to view this now historic monument.

Anton Cottier, President of the Upper House in Berne, hailed "the spirit of Caux, which opposes hatred and violence in the world, generating a spirit of dialogue and cooperation". The Mayor of Montreux referred to Caux as "this citadel of silence in the service of humanity".

# Business initiatives for social and environmental responsibility

Information technology consultant Mohan Bhagwandas from Melbourne writes after attending the conference on "Globalization – conflict or opportunity."

The July 2002 conference was organised by the Caux Initiatives for Business (CIB), set up in 2001 to provide a more structured approach to organising dialogues to "strengthen the motivation of care

A 1999 OECD study had shown that of the 100 largest economic entities in the world, 51 were companies and 49 were states. General Motors and the next five largest corporations if merged would qualify for G7 status. Trade between the subsidiaries of multi-nationals now accounted for more than half of world trade. Citing these facts Dr Kimon Valaskakis, president of the Club of Athens, said there was no global anti-trust law nor global standards of accounting. "We are not ready for world government, but what we need is world governance."

life and thinking in order to create jobs, correct economic and environmental imbalance, and tackle the root causes of poverty."

In the face of much evidence of the negative impact of globalization around the world, the CIB conference highlighted key initiatives by large corporations indicating a new determination by big business to take social and environmental responsibility in the world.

For example:

## India: human development

- Sarosh Gandhi, Managing Director of TELCON,

Tata Steel (Tisco) and Tata Engineering (Telco), are amongst India's largest private sector firms. The company spends around US\$20 million a year on providing facilities to their employees. These ranged

including private hospitals and subsidised power supply, to rural village development projects, community forestry, family planning and welfare. Despite these costs Sarosh Gandy said, "Tata Steel produces the cheapest steel in the world, and exports its products all over Asia, Europe and America."

## UK: values-based business

Andrea Cooper, Manager Consumer Products, Procter & Gamble

Procter & Gamble markets over 250 brands of consumer products to nearly five billion consumers in over 140 countries.

In 2001 P&G contributed US\$40 million to 1300 organisations. Add to this P&G employees offer hundreds of hours each year for voluntary projects. Evidence was presented of P&G's values-based business tradition "rooted in the principles of personal integrity and respect for the individual". The phrase "doing what's right" is a slogan that is part of the P&G culture. Andrea Cooper outlined a key local initiative she was involved in, sponsored by the company, that trains young leaders in the local community, in management and business skills.

## USA: planting a million trees

Don Cowles, Senior Executive, Alcoa

Alcoa is a bauxite mining and manufacturing multinational with 129,000 employees in 38 countries.

Alcoa has gone through a "fundamental change" over the past 10 years. As part of its environmental commitment, Alcoa aimed in 1998 to plant a million trees in six continents in 10 years. But the target was expected to be achieved next year. The company gives \$250 to any charity for which any employee gives 50 hours of service. If 10 or more employees form a team and implement a day-long project to help a local charity, that charity receives \$3,000. In 2001, the company and its foundation donated US\$52 million in 2,000 grants in 26 countries.

For more details on these hope-giving projects and many others around the world, email Mohan Bhagwandas at [mohanb@optusnet.com.au](mailto:mohanb@optusnet.com.au) or visit [www.cauxinitiativesforbusiness.org](http://www.cauxinitiativesforbusiness.org)

## Facing global competition... and winning

Bombay businessman Suresh Vazirani told the Caux international business conference "Globalization: from conflict to opportunity" how his company has met the challenges of international competition. Transasia Biomedical, which he founded in 1980, exports diagnostic machines for blood diseases to 30 countries.

The company is India's market leader. But it faced severe competition from American, German and Japanese manufacturers when, between 1995-97, the Indian government reduced import tariffs from 40 per cent to five per cent, in compliance with World Trade Organization rules. "What could we do?" posed Vazirani. "Our sales were going down. We realized that globalization was not only for these countries but also for us. We reduced our costs and decided to compete with all the other players in the world. Efficiency was the key word – how to reduce man hours?" The company was manufacturing 5,000 machines annually for the domestic market, but calculated that it could produce 20,000 annually for the world market.

He admitted that he was shocked when the new efficiencies introduced enabled the company to consider laying off 60 out of its 350 employees. "How could we lay off the very people who had made us efficient? We refused to do so. We put more people into sales and servicing." Thirty people were also transferred to research and development. "In the next five years

we can continue to compete with other machines. We are now technically as advanced as Japanese and European products," Vazirani claimed. The company sells to Germany and has continued to grow, now employing 450 people. Last year's profits were \$3 million on a turnover of \$30 million.

Vazirani said that he had to spend 60 per cent of his time in tackling corruption issues, and the company employs two lawyers full time to address the court cases which come because of the company's policy of refusing to pay bribes. He told how it took his lawyers four years costing \$7,400 to get a license for a drinking fountain in the lunch area. But they persisted, refusing to pay bribes.

"Globalization is here to stay. So we might as well make it an opportunity rather than seeing it as a threat," Vazirani told the conference. India faced many structural changes in the face of globalization, he said, but above all there was a need "to develop a compassionate and caring society, through a lot of individuals making personal choices."

## Learning to get real

*Canberra musician Chris Lancaster was another of the Australians volunteering to staff the summer conferences... and "learning a great deal" in the process:*

### Conference highlights:

The Renewal Arts conference, with many inspiring moments of art, from music to meditation to film and theatre. The quality of the musical contribution flowed on through other sessions with a Brazilian jazz trio, a Hungarian string quartet, an Australian Aboriginal guitarist and a Roumanian / Swiss duo to name a few.

The intergenerational dialogue on globalization. And the leadership of young people from around the world as regular participants, Caux Scholars and Interns in facilitating and enlivening the whole process of Caux, from service shifts to discussion groups.

Three-day workshop on "The West's response to asylum seekers" looked at the tightening of European asylum laws, grassroots initiatives and refugees as resources.

An American Professor of Sociology, born in Caux to refugee parents who were fleeing the persecution of Jews during the second World War. He told how 1,600 Jews found safe haven at Caux in its days as a refugee camp.

A Buryat from Buryatia - surely the first at Caux - attended a workshop on the indigenous peoples of Russia.

A healing venture out of the American civil war envisioned by Alex Wise from an old southern family, the great great grandson of the man who signed the death warrant of John Brown (immortalised in the song). The project is to create a museum that will tell everyone's story - the African-American, Union and Confederate histories all told in the same space, a first in the USA. It could set a healing precedent for many other situations around the world.

The courageous wife of a Sudanese guerilla leader, living in exile with her four children for 19 years during which her husband has only been able to spend 8 months in total with them, sharing the challenge of bringing the children up "without sowing the seeds of hate in their hearts".

Various things became more real to me during my month at Caux.

The value of deep, vulnerable friendships became more real as I talked with people who taught me a great deal out of their experience. I found that when I was open enough to share some of my own struggles, and they shared their failings and victories, we could both benefit and move to a deeper level of fellowship and trust. It is a blessing to feel part of a team with such people, and to feel known in my weaknesses as well as my strengths.

The absolute moral standards of honesty, purity, unselfishness and love became more real to me as I finally began to face the challenge of measuring my whole life, not just carefully edited segments of it, against those standards. Again, sharing with a friend turned my weakness into the strength to make things different. Among other things I was prompted to write letters putting right two relationships where the hurts and

hardness of my own heart have remained unresolved for many months.

The crucial factor of listening to God became more real as I realised that only by obeying all his directions could I be of any use to his plan for me and the world. A person in one of our discussion groups said that the ability to listen is something we all have in common, whatever our spiritual path.

On my last day in Caux I had planned to walk up the mountain with some friends, but that morning I thought clearly not to go - it was only after some wrestling with myself that I gave up my own wishes and obeyed the thought. In the time I would have been away I had wonderfully rich conversations with four people, some of which may well have a direct bearing on the coming months.

God had been right again, and I was reminded of the need to follow all those apparently small thoughts.

## An insight into the running of Caux

*Veronica Thwaites, an Honours Arts graduate from Sydney University, volunteered to work for three weeks on the small team of switchboard operators at Mountain House during the European summer.*

I travelled to Caux after spending four months in India, working with an NGO, and a more different environment to India than Switzerland could not be imagined.

The afternoon I arrived, I made my way along to the telephone switchboard office - a large booth surrounded by windows - and made my presence known, feeling a little nervous about my French language skills. But I managed to get by. And so began a whole new insight for me into the running of Caux.

On the switchboard I got to know who did what with whom, and where to find them when. I also became very familiar with many of the names of the conference participants so that when I actually came face-to-face with them, I confused them by addressing them like old friends. Apart from this interesting experience I did manage to see something of the conferences that were going on.

A highlight of the "Globalization - from conflict to opportunity" conference was the talk by Dr Kimon Valaskakis, former Canadian

ambassador to the OECD in Paris and founding president of Club of Athens\*. Amongst other points that held me fascinated, he pointed out that the people who are really using globalization to its full advantage are the criminals, while laws and governments are being left behind.

The **Arts Renewal** conference exceeded my rather cynical expectations by not once becoming simply an excuse for artistes to strut their stuff but by maintaining a spiritual and moral basis. I found this refreshing. French actor Michel Orphelin and English composer Kathleen Dodds, who were part of an opening panel of speakers, had inspiring stories of coming to terms with their art and the conflicts which arose for them as they tried to nut out their paths in life and what they wanted to live for. They were just two of many inspiring individuals who helped to make it a wonderfully interesting and diverse conference.

\* Dr Valaskakis' comments can be found on [www.caux.ch/](http://www.caux.ch/)

## ***Caux Lecture series***

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*year's speakers included the UN High Commissioner for Refugees Prof. Ruud Lubbers; an internationally known Egyptian artist-painter, Ahmed Moustafa; and a former Foreign Minister of Canada, Prof. Lloyd Axworthy.*

### ***'Millions of refugees live in the most degrading conditions of abject poverty'***

**Prof. Lubbers**, a former Dutch Prime Minister, questioned the millions that governments spend on reinforcing borders, on deterrence measures and detention centres "while refusing to invest in tackling the problems at source, where solutions should begin". He condemned the "general stigmatisation of refugees and asylum seekers as people trying to break the law... Millions of refugees and other displaced people live in the most degrading conditions of

abject poverty." Lubbers concluded that refugees could enrich our societies – as many have done in the past. "They have the capacity to become valuable citizens, not a burden, not a risk. Genuine refugees are themselves victims of persecution and terrorism, not its perpetrators. We should all constantly remind ourselves that one day, any of us could be knocking at someone else's door, asking for help."

### ***'God will hold a man responsible for his entrusted gift'***

From politics and international affairs to the linkage between art, science, geometry and faith. In his thought-provoking lecture, Egyptian artist and calligrapher **Ahmed Moustafa** introduced a Muslim perspective to "Symbols and treasures – towards a common ground." Speaking during the *Renewal Arts* session he said, "God will hold a man responsible for his entrusted gift and how he dealt with such trust." He warned against being "wasteful, in making his talent instrumental to glorify his ego" rather than his Creator. He quoted Abraham from the Qur'an:

"Do you worship something that you (yourselves) have carved, while it is God who has created you and all your handiwork?"

Dr Moustafa shared his own vision of "the divine mercy, like an immense spring exceeding all oceans and seas put together, where the entirety of mankind swims and drinks from it.

"All people are equal, enjoying absolute justice: the knower and the ignorant, the believer and denier, the strong and the weak, the rich and the poor."

### ***'Reconciliation is the right direction to go even if we see no light at the end'***

Korean-born **Syngman Rhee**, last year's moderator of the Presbyterian Church (USA) General Assembly, gave the third Caux lecture. Committed to the reconciliation of North and South Korea, he shared the story of his childhood in North Korea, the death of his father in prison under the Communists, and his mother sending himself and

his brother to the South on foot in the middle of winter. They never saw her again. He spoke of the 10 million families still separated in Korea. "I am committing myself to this walk," he said. "It is the right direction to go even if we see no light at the end of the tunnel." Rhee stressed the need for "active endurance".

### ***'One of the most profound interactions of civilized people'***

During the *Agenda for Reconciliation's "Peace-building Initiatives"* conference, **Dr Aaron Lazare**, Chancellor and Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Massachusetts medical school, gave a lecture on the theme "The Healing Power of Apology". His talk was based on material for a book he has researched over many years and due to be published shortly. One of his basic contentions, in opposition to the views of Freud, is that damage to human dignity is the greatest problem; "This is what grudges are about, not sex."

He described the offering and acceptance of apologies as "one of the most profound interactions of civilised people". Even belated apologies, months, even centuries later, can be of help, he claimed. He cited many recent examples from international affairs. He saw little difference between apologies person-to-person and nation-to-nation. "Apology is the only cure for a humiliation, to break the circle of grudges and vengeance," he said.

Why have apologies grown in importance, he asked? He suggested that the turn of the millennium as "a time for a fresh start, soul searching, a clean slate, a moral reckoning," had contributed to the "explosion of apologies" in the 1990s. The example of Pope John Paul II in publicly apologising for the wrongs of the Catholic Church had set a high profile example.

He outlined the four parts to an apology:

- ◆ acknowledgement of the offence;
- ◆ communicating remorse, forbearance and shame;
- ◆ offering an explanation for the offence;
- ◆ making reparations.

He gave examples of false apologies that had the audience in gales of laughter: a politician saying passively "Mistakes were made," to avoid saying "I made mistakes". He went on to quote powerful examples of genuine apology, from a German President, apologising for Germany's crimes of the last war, and the head of the Bureau of Indian Affairs for the suffering of the Native American peoples. He asked why the latter brought him close to tears, and answered his own question, "This is an American story; I have shame for my own nation – I think that's why it affects me."

The professor went on, "I'm not guilty, but we have an obligation to be ashamed. We take pride in our countries, in the good things they did and do. We take pride because we belong to them, but we must take the shame too. You have no national soul if you don't deal with the bad things as well.

"An apology is like a gift that's given to you, that restores your dignity. The pus has gone out of the wound. An apology is an act of honesty, generosity, commitment and courage."



## The 10th Asia Pacific Youth Conference Bridges to Vietnam... and across Asia

*Brilliantly decked out in national costumes and accompanied by traditional Malay drumming, the 130 participants of the 10th Asia Pacific Youth Conference (APYC) launched into a week of lively, profound and creative interaction around the theme, "The future of the world is my future". And what a future it could be – for Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Korea and Cambodia to mention just some of the 12 nations represented.*

*The conference was held at the Genting Permai Resort in the hills outside Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Mostly in their 20's, the participants – students and social activists – discussed issues of leadership, identity and globalization. They explored their personal responsibility in shaping a future that cares and shares. Loan Phan from Australia writes on the experience:*

This *Asia Pacific Youth Conference* was my first and a very special one for a number of reasons.

First, it was the event concluding my journey of faith in *Action For Life (AFL)*. I have found a faith beyond any particular religion, which unites and strengthens all of us. And I have gained a deeper sense of independence, one that does not waver and collapse with the economy and various markets, but which gives me a clear sense of personal direction in life, freedom and passion to contribute.

*Action for Life* was truly an enriching experience in so many ways, showing me the spirit of giving and caring for others.

Secondly, the *APYC* was special because among the participants, there were four from Vietnam whom we had met when *AFL* had visited Vietnam. One other Vietnamese- Australian was

also able to join us. Many things had happened since the end of the Vietnam War, and I felt it was an opportune time to start building bridges of friendship and trust between fellow Vietnamese.

To effectively deal with concerns of the 21st century, the conference addressed many key issues for young people. As participants shared their cultural backgrounds and areas of concern in their nations, networks of friendship and support were created. In particular, the story sharing sessions and morning reflections were much needed space for some to open up and realise long-held feelings.

The Vietnamese came with limited understanding of the core ideas and practices of MRA-IC and issues of trust challenged our comfort zones. However, basic honesty and willingness to open up enhanced our

personal growth. At the end of the conference we parted feeling deeply moved and much closer to one another. We resolved to keep in touch and continue sharing honestly to build on the friendship that was created.

### Developments since...

Emails have flown between those who attended the *APYC* since they returned home – some with photos, some talking about personal decisions, some planning action.

Within 10 days of returning those who came from Korea conducted a four-day MRA-IC summer camp for university students and the youth.

The general-secretary of a university student association in Jakarta emailed that "I found I could talk to everybody here in my campus, sincerely, and with no wall blocking me." And then, "By the way, the Indonesian team has a plan for launching of MRA in Indonesia by holding some seminars at several campuses, end of September or early October... And they won't accept it if we don't deliver the idea in a rational and logical way." He and his friends are asking for resources and help.

A student at an institute of economics and management in Battambang, Cambodia, returned from the *APYC* and "kept a quiet time for fifteen minutes (and it) made me clearly change my life."

Now he and four others have met the director of their institute and convinced him "to give us time to share with our classmates". They are planning a one-day program on MRA and its purpose. "We want to share with them about our wrong- doing in the past and the way to put it right; and how important it is to ourselves, our neighbours, country and the world."

*A report of the Asia Pacific Youth Conference is being edited and will be available from the address on page 8.*

### 19 good reasons for having a 'quiet-time'

*During the preparation for the APYC, members of "Action for Life" put together a list of reasons for having a "quiet time" each day. Here are some of them:*

1. be heard; of listening for connection, correction and direction.
2. Acknowledgement of a higher authority, of God /the Divine Other/ Truth.
3. To nurture the relationship with God at the core of one's being.
4. Self-emptying, detaching, to make space for God and Divine guidance.
5. Important for 3D living; it challenges superficiality by entering a more profound dimension than the one we live in most of the time.
6. A means to discern right and wrong using the absolute moral standards of honesty, purity, unselfishness and love as guides.
7. A spiritual discipline.
8. Protection against "group think", a recall to individual responsibility.
9. Protection against knee jerk reactions.
10. An expression of our need; an awareness of our own inadequacy.
11. Recognition of a Grace Gap that human expertise cannot fill.
12. A motive-checking moment.
13. To receive correction direct, rather than going through other human agencies.
14. For rejuvenation, to find peace of heart.
15. To give your tongue a rest and your ears a treat.
16. To find balance, a different perspective.
17. To discover the next step in God's plan for your life.
18. A safe place to hear what you have not wanted to hear, to see what you have not wanted to see.
19. Where liberation starts....

## Action for Life :

# Learning to 'let life be an offering'

The "Action for Life" program finished with a time of reconnecting and evaluation in Malaysia at the end of July. As a final action participants then helped to facilitate the Asia Pacific Youth Conference before returning to their respective countries, with a sense that the "action" would continue. Australian **Nigel Heywood**, for instance, has gone on to work with MRA-IC in the UK, assisting with the youth magazine "Global Express". Another participant, **Sharon Hopkins** from Canada, has arrived in Melbourne to work with MRA-IC. **Hale Igome** (below) is on his way back to Papua New Guinea with a new sense of calling for his work ahead. **Loan Phan** (see report opposite) and **Laura Vertigan** returned to Melbourne and Perth respectively. *Laura reflects on the experience as she makes the decisions that will shape her life:*

Closing my eyes as I sit listening to the rain, I am transported back to India. A cool little hand on my arm begging rupees, noisy traffic, kites flying, firecrackers hissing, a surreal campfire surrounded by tribal villagers singing traditional greetings outside in an electric storm and fierce wind, listening to students, cold bucket baths, sweltering heat, delicious food, and the warmth of so many friends. Then to Taiwan, Korea, and Japan, where people enthusiastically embrace our time with them in spite of their ridiculously busy schedules and etch themselves permanently in my heart – wiping away any trace of prejudice I might have still had. And afterwards to China, Hong Kong, Malaysia...could

all that really have happened? Surely I was dreaming.

It did happen and it occurs to me not for the first time that I am quite probably the luckiest person in the world. I am learning to accept God's love for me, be myself, take life one day at a time, love others regardless of differences, listen, discipline myself, and discover what I am supposed to be doing. I am learning that I can't sit around waiting for someone else to take action, and I can't wait until I become perfect before I start taking action.

The next steps are gradually becoming clear, and I'm no longer too afraid to take them.

from mainland PNG have often had towards the people of Bougainville. When we first arrived we had a discussion with the PNG defence force commanders. We told them that our wish was to help rebuild trust and friendship. When we had a time of quiet reflection together, the senior officer said, "If the spirit is willing, why should we stop you." So we set off into the jungle and walked many hours. At last we reached the frontier of the BRA and were welcomed with guns. They told us, "Don't be scared. We will look after you." Once in their hiding place we talked – a communication of the heart – and trust began to be built. It was a real breakthrough, a step towards the decision on all sides to find a way forward out of the conflict and deadlock.

For the last five months I have travelled and worked with the *Action for Life* venture. To be part of a team representing different cultures and religions has provided a new view of life and has also given me the chance to break free from the many fears I had. I realise that listening to God and openhearted communication, as well as being keys to teamwork are essential to the right kind of development globally. So I feel thankful for each one in *Action for Life* because I have learnt a lot from them. Their gifts and skills have helped me improve my simple skills.

Soon I am returning to Papua New Guinea. I have one main question on my mind: "Where should I begin to build the team for the vital work that MRA-IC has to do in my country?" From my experience already, I know that answers will come as I listen to God and carry out whatever He has for me.

## PNG: The keys to development

I come from Milne Bay on the eastern tip of Papua New Guinea.

My parents died when I was just twelve and I started to live a reckless life. Drugs, drinking and smoking were my constant companions in those days and I basically just followed my desires.

After my decision to quit that way of life, I felt my heart leading me to work with other young people who were lost or struggling. I gave the next 15 years of my life at a vocational training centre in Milne Bay working without salary to help equip some of these young people, practically and spiritually.

The thought I had in doing this was that the best way to make amends for my years of wrong living was to consciously try to find the right path each day. This led me to learn the practice of listening to God every morning and seeking His plan for my life. Through this, I came to the conclusion that living on this basis would be my commitment always.

For 15 years a full scale civil war has dragged on between the PNG armed forces and Bougainvilleans who

felt disadvantaged by the development of the copper mine there. Thousands have lost their lives.

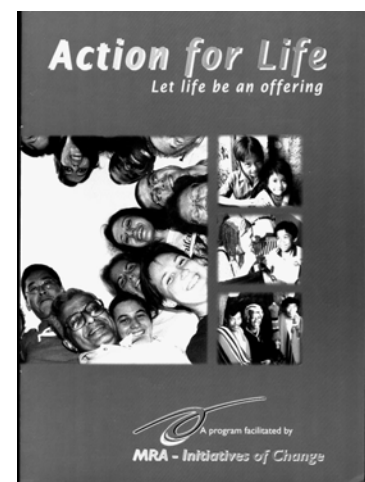
I was part of a team from Milne Bay that went to Bougainville to engage in a peacemaking initiative. We went to meet people on all sides of the situation but especially the commanders of the Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA) to ask forgiveness for the negative attitude we

*"It's been the journey of a lifetime..."*

*The first words of a 16-page colour report of "Action for Life", prepared by participants in the last week of the program while in Kuala Lumpur.*

*It traces their journey, where they went, the people they met, what they learned, and how they were financed.*

*Copies are available from the addresses on page 8, free of cost but \$1 each for postage.*



# Setting yourself free

The 11th Life Matters Course was held at Armagh in Melbourne in July. The 14 participants made up a fascinating group comprising 11 ethnic backgrounds. Three had come especially from overseas, including Ola Wedzony from Poland who is here to work for three months with MRA-IC. On the final night, guests crowded into a packed Armagh ballroom were entertained with sketches and songs.

Along with the creativity were stories of personal transformation. In the midst of his magician act, Owen Lean (UK) spoke of the phone call he had had with his younger sister the previous night and of the apology he had made to her. Andrew Pearce (Queensland) told of his decision to forgive the person who had used him, and to end the resentment which had built up. Yaritji Green (South Australia) had spent hours drawing a dot painting depicting the teaching of the women in her Aboriginal tribe.

A moving apology was made by Noriko Arie (Japan) to Sung Kwon Kim (Korea) for the wrongs of the war. Sung Kwon replied he was more sure about the future as a result. Mohyidin Ali (Somalia) gave his decision to go back and help in his country and Kimi Kiangte (Mizoram) told of the personal freedom she had gained through the course. Yaritji Green writes of her experience:

The Life Matters course was "Go, go, go!!!" We started at 8am and usually finished around 10pm and then sleep actually came a lot later, with all the late night chats in my room with new-found friends.

In my time at Armagh there were two sessions that were important to me:

In the "Facing the facts of history" session we watched a video of the white man appearing to the Aboriginal people for the first time. After watching the video I was asked to say a few words. I spoke about how the European invasion had affected the Aboriginal people in every aspect of their lives. First they stole their land, then they brought diseases, and then they stole their children – they thought they were doing something right.

My mum was part of the stolen generation; she was taken with all her brothers and sisters, except for my grandmother's last child. I told them how at the age of four or five, mum was fostered into a home where she was not allowed to speak her native tongue. That was only one of the many cruel things done to her in the years she lived with her foster family. These things made my mum a stronger person. She set out to find her real mother, and her brothers and sisters. It took her almost 25 years, but she found them all and brought them back together.

After hearing me talk at that session I was asked to say something in a session on forgiveness. The Aboriginal past has not been easy; there are many hurts and sorrows that

have led my people on bitter paths dragging them through drugs, alcohol and ill health.

What I have learnt from my people's life, my family's life and my life is that if you are unable to forgive then you are a prisoner of your past. When you learn to forgive you set yourself free. If you don't forgive then you are a prisoner to the people who have hurt you, your bitterness and hurts will chain you to them until you are able to let go. Forgiveness allows you to move forward.

I enjoyed my time at Armagh, and I hope to return some day soon.

*A further Life Matters Course will be held from 7-16 February, 2003. Brochures are available from the address below*

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## Looking for young adults with intellectual rigour, public spiritedness and a quest for meaning in life

September 30 is the deadline for applications to be in for the *Humanity, Belief and Freedom Course*. Brochures for the 10-day course to run from 14-24 November, 2002, have been widely circulated.

Writing about the Course which she has invited to Australia, Quynh-Tram Trinh, a civil servant with Commonwealth Treasury in Canberra said, "The course seeks to select 25 self-nominated young adults from multi-faith and multicultural background. We look for people with maturity, intellectual rigour, public spiritedness and a quest for meaning in life. It will enable young adult Australians to discuss, debate and develop a deeper understanding of the essence of humanity and the values which are required to maintain and grow a thriving national culture.

"Graduates of this course in Eastern and Western Europe have found new challenges in themselves, individually and as a group, which have led to positive action and change in their communities. This, as a result, has brought about a new quality of leadership in their countries."

The Course will be presented by Erik Andren from the UK who specialises in human development. It would have particular interest to students and young professional people.

*Brochures and further information are available from your local MRA-IC representatives or by ringing (03) 9822 1218, or through the course website [www.mra.org.au/bhf.html](http://www.mra.org.au/bhf.html)*



The third in a series of "Open Homes and Listening Hearts" was held in Perth on 10 August. A cross-section of our multi-cultural society and guests from Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Iraq, England and New Zealand were welcomed by Oriel Green, an Aboriginal elder.

"Life in the Philippines" was the theme of the evening. Dante and Elsa Maribbay and Rosie Norriss gave a colourful picture of their native land, its historical background, the education and judicial systems, the economy and religious practices. All three gave instances of the way they had stood up to electoral fraud and bribery before coming to Australia.

*– Lindsay Cartwright*

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All your contributions of items, news, comments are welcome. Next deadline: Wednesday 18 September 2002, to "The Editors" **NEWSBRIEFS**, 64 Barnsbury Grove, Bardwell Park, NSW 2207 Fax: (02) 9591 9597 E-mail: [millsdj@ozemail.com.au](mailto:millsdj@ozemail.com.au)  
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