



The Olive Branch

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The Olive Branch is a publication of the Center for Peace and Conflict Studies at Ball State University. Every issue, we shine a spotlight on people, events, campus groups, conferences, and organizations who are working towards a more peaceful world.



Betty Williams, Northern Ireland



EST. 1918



Women's Wall in India

Protesting Gender Inequality in India: “Where a man can enter, a woman can also go.”

In September 2018, the Indian Supreme Court overturned a 20-year ban that stated women of menstruating age were not allowed to enter many Hindu* temples in India. This ban of women’s presence in temples emphasized the stigma held by many Indian people around menstruation and its supposed unhygienic, impure nature; subsequently preventing women from entering places of worship. Through not allowing women into sacred places, they are banned from an important part of Indian religious life and spirituality exclusively because of their gender, and as a result are socially seen as less able or powerful. Despite this newly installed law, women of menstruating age (between ages 10 and 50) were not permitted entry to one of India’s most sacred Hindu temples due to mobs of protesters – the Sabarimala temple in the southern Indian state of Kerala, a common place for pilgrimage. When women attempted to legally enter the temple after the overturning of the ban, they were attacked by mobs of right-wing protesters.



Sabarimala Temple
in Kerala

By December 2018, after many more women were violently threatened in their attempt to enter the temple, the Left Democratic Front party decided to organize a protest that would get national and international attention. With the help of volunteers from over 176 independent women’s organizations and political parties in India, the state of Kerala helped raise funds and spread awareness of the event. Through news broadcasts and social media posts, word of the demonstration spread quickly, even among rural areas. Women all over India were preparing to combat gender inequality in the religious context on a scale never seen before.

Protesting Gender Inequality in India: “Where a man can enter, a woman can also go.”

On New Year’s Day 2019, the time had come to protest. Private busses were arranged to take women to various points along National Highway 66, which partially runs through the state of Kerala. Between 3.5 million and 5 million women of all ages lined up along the highway to form the continuous “women’s wall,” making it the largest public gathering of women in India. The wall stretched from the northern part of Kerala in the city of Kasaragod, to the southern end in the city of Thiruvanthapuram, bringing the final chain length to a whopping 385 miles. Many men stood on the sidelines in support of their wives, daughters, and friends. In a moment of solidarity and pledging for equality, the women standing in line held hands for 15 minutes. Women had come together to show they would not accept being treated as second-class citizens in work, life, and spirituality--their societal perception as impure would not be tolerated.

Women from all over India gathered to take part in the Women’s Wall in Kerala



On the day following the demonstration, two women (who wish to remain anonymous for their protection) were able to visit the shrine, escorted by police in the early hours of the morning in order to avoid the violent mobs that had previously prevented them from entering the temple. Between January 4th and 18th of 2019, a reported 51 women of menstrual age dodged protesters with the help of police escort in order to enter the Sabarimala shrine.

Protesting Gender Inequality in India: “Where a man can enter, a woman can also go.”

As a result of the protest, social justice in the form of gender equality is coming (and will continue to come) in waves in India. Police are now required to give protection to anyone who requests security in their entry to Sabarimala. Although there is still a great deal of uproar that prevents women from being able to enter the temple, the historical demonstration put on by women in January 2019 has had long-lasting effects for the rights of women; not only in terms of entering this temple, but in encouraging people all over India to push the fight for gender equality.



Scenes from the Women's Wall, New Year's Day 2019



*Hinduism is an Indian religion and way of life widely practiced in India and parts of Southeast Asia. Specific beliefs and practices associated with Hinduism vary from person to person, but may include: vegetarianism, nonviolence, belief in rebirth, and caste.

When a Citizen Demands Peace: Betty Williams' Story

Northern Ireland is a tiny country that sits on the north coast of the island of Ireland. The republic of Ireland declared independence from the United Kingdom (UK) in the 1920s, but Northern Ireland remained in the UK. This is in part because British Protestants made up the majority of the population in the north, so they wanted to remain in the UK, while Irish Catholics made up the majority of the population in the south. Historically, Irish Catholics experienced extreme discrimination from British Protestants in the island of Ireland. Catholics did not have the same job opportunities, housing opportunities, or political opportunities, and this was especially true in Northern Ireland where they were the minority. In the late 1960s, a group called the Irish Republican Army (IRA) rose up in arms against this oppression of Irish Catholics throughout Northern Ireland. They began engaging in guerilla warfare against the British government and Protestant communities, which began a 30-year period of extreme violence known as "The Troubles." The IRA utilized guns and homemade bombs, and the British retaliated with bigger guns and armored tanks. Approximately 3,500 people were killed, 52 per cent of whom were civilians not involved in the IRA or the British army.



Scenes from The Troubles in Northern Ireland

In 1976, seven years after The Troubles began, an incident occurred in Belfast, Northern Ireland involving the IRA and the British Army. An IRA man was speeding away from the troops down a busy street when the British soldiers opened fire on the vehicle, killing the driver. The car then swerved onto the sidewalk and struck a mother and her four children—leading to the death of three children. This tragedy was observed by several bystanders, including a housewife and secretary named Betty Williams.

When a Citizen Demands Peace: Betty Williams' Story

Betty Williams's father was a Protestant, but her mother was a Catholic. Mixed marriages were not common, and this upbringing provided Ms. Williams with a perspective of religious tolerance not widely shared in Northern Ireland. She was enraged by the senseless violence which led to the death of three innocent children. To Ms. Williams, it did not matter whether it was the IRA's fault or the British army's fault. She believed the violence needed to end.



Betty Williams (left) and
Mairead Corrigan (right)

Co-founders of the
Community of Peace People

Betty Williams decided she had seen too much violence between the IRA, British government, Catholic, and Protestant communities to remain silent. Therefore, she began speaking out against intolerance between the Protestants and Catholics, first in her local neighborhood and then to her politicians and anyone else who would listen. She was invited to speak on both Irish and British radio programs, along with the aunt of the children who had been killed, Mairead Corrigan. Upon meeting, Williams and Corrigan began a close friendship which was bonded by the mutual desire to see peace replace the violence in their city and their country.

The two women founded the peace organization called the Community of Peace People. This grassroots organization led protests against violence and brought together people from both Protestant and Catholic communities. The Community of the Peace People committed to building a just and peaceful society in Northern Ireland through nonviolent means—a society based on respect for individuals with the highest standards of human and civil rights. The work of the organization culminated in Williams and Corrigan receiving a Nobel Peace Prize in 1976.

When a Citizen Demands Peace: Betty Williams' Story

The Troubles officially ended in 1998 with the signing of the Belfast “Good Friday Agreement.” Between 1969 and 1998, over 3,500 people lost their lives, and countless more were injured both physically and mentally. The peace process in the community has been widely successful in reducing violence in the past twenty years, but tensions between the Catholic and Protestant communities remain in Northern Ireland.



Mairead Corrigan, Ciaran McKeown (a member of the Community of the Peace People), and Betty Williams with the 1976 Nobel Peace Prize

Today, the Community of the Peace People, currently called the Peace People, continue their work to bring the two communities in Northern Ireland together. They work to heal divisions through intercommunity dialogue, host discussions about the type of future citizens of Northern Ireland want for themselves and their children, and they work to empower citizens through education about nonviolent solutions to social and political problems. Additionally, the Peace People advocate for peace and nonviolence globally. They have engaged in dialogues and protests in Iraq, Israel, Palestine, Austria, and the United States. The Peace People have seen Northern Ireland change for the better, replacing violence with dialogue and peaceful protest. They would not have been able to make this impact if a determined secretary named Betty Williams had not taken action for peace.

Festival of Faiths 2019

The Center for Interfaith Cooperation (CIC) held their 7th annual Festival of Faiths in Indianapolis on September 22nd, 2019. The Center for Peace and Conflict Studies had the privilege of partnering with the festival again this year, and we were able to participate in the celebrations with the presence of our Traveling Peace Pole. The Festival of Faiths was designed to recognize and celebrate the diverse religious landscape of Central Indiana. A primary goal of the festival was to heighten awareness about the many religious congregations which coexist in Central Indiana; subsequently providing an opportunity to share and learn about each other's traditions in an open and public setting. Since the formation of the CIC in 2011, the organization has built up a large, robust, and diverse network of partnerships with Central Indiana congregations, colleges, and universities, and civic and community organizations. One of its most important assets in fulfilling this mission is CIC's diverse and active board, consisting of forty religious and community leaders.

Our Traveling Peace Pole attracted the attention of many festivalgoers. The peace pole is an interactive piece of art created in April 2017 for our event entitled, "Build Peace." It asks people to answer the question "What does peace mean to you?" on a brightly colored circle of paper, thereby forming a visual reminder of the diversity and commitment to peace embraced by members of the Ball State University and Central Indiana communities. These circles are strung together to symbolize the unity that peace brings. The peace pole also serves to commemorate persons who lost their lives in the month of April because of violent tragedies, such as the bombing of the Boston Marathon (April 15, 2013), the Columbine High School Massacre (April 20, 1999), and the Oklahoma City bombing that killed 168 people (April 19, 1995). Many people at the festival stopped to participate, add their contributions to the Peace Pole, and we were able to have meaningful discussions about peace and interfaith unity.

Festival of Faiths 2019

This year's festival theme of "Embracing Religious Diversity," was clearly displayed in the warm friendships among leaders and members of various religious institutions. Festival attendees were encouraged to learn about various religions and consider how they could be supportive of each other in their everyday lives. Approximately three dozen groups and congregations were gathered to celebrate religious diversity and vitality at the Festival. Moreover, all the displays and activities at the Festival were a call to learn how to coexist with people of various walks of life, religions included, and a call to figure out how to pursue peace through understanding and cooperation. The Festival facilitated a beautiful collection of religious and spiritual cultures and encouraged its participants to view each other as fellow human beings, despite potential differences. We were grateful for the opportunity to participate in an event where people from all backgrounds could come together to celebrate life, each other, our unique differences, and the promise of a more peaceful future.



Scenes from the
Festival of Faiths 2019



CONFERENCES

Concerned Philosophers for Peace Conference

October 18-19 | Colorado Springs, CO

The theme of this year's conference is "Politics, Polarity, and Peace."

1st International Conference on Environmental Peacebuilding

October 23-25 | Irvine, CA

This conference will cover a wide range of topics, including technology and innovation in environmental peacebuilding; environmental governance, law, and conflict prevention; causes of conflict; and much more.

PEACE-PHS Joint Conference

October 24-26 | Kent, OH

This year's conference theme is "Commemorating Violent Conflicts and Building Sustainable Peace." This is leading up to the 50th anniversary of the May 4, 1970 shooting by the Ohio National Guard of Kent State students during a demonstration against the Vietnam War and the occupation of the Kent State campus by the Ohio National Guard. Documenting violence, delivering accountability, and providing evidence-based insight into the causes, consequences, and ways forward are critical steps in peacebuilding following violent conflicts. This conference seeks to further this key work.

2019 Annual international Conference on Ethnic and Religious Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding

October 28-31 | Bronx, NY

The theme of this year's conference is "Ethno-Religious Conflict and Economic Development: Is there a Correlation?"

Positive Peace Conference 2019

October 29 | Stanford, CA

This conference is a forum to explore how strengthening peace in societies can improve economic outcomes, sustainability, social cohesion, and resilience.

Kroc Institute Sustainable Peace Conference

November 8-10 | Notre Dame, IN

This interdisciplinary conference will focus on four key themes: understanding violence, peacemaking, confronting injustice, and building peaceful societies.

ON AND OFF CAMPUS EVENTS

Lifelong Learners: Food Sustainability in Delaware County **October 15th, 3:00 PM**

Dr. Josh Gruver, Ball State Natural Resources and Environmental Management Department, will speak about the Muncie Food Hub Partnership and how it's battling food insecurity in East Central Indiana. We will also learn about the Hults Environmental Educational Center.

Wine, Dine & Unwind, 2019 Fundraiser **October 16, 5:30 PM**

The 6th annual StarPress Wine, Dine & Unwind presented by IU Health Ball Memorial Hospital, located at the Horizon Convention Center, will showcase local vendors from across Central Indiana targeted towards women's health, beauty, and spirit. The event serves as a fundraiser for the IU Ball Memorial Cancer Boutique which provides services to local cancer patients.

Please note that this is a 21 and over event.

Red Ribbon Community Breakfast **October 22, 7:00 AM**

This breakfast will kick off Red Ribbon Week for drug abuse prevention at the Horizon Convention Center. There will be a panel of Delaware County professionals from law enforcement, prevention and treatment as well as a performance by the Delaware County PRIDE Team. This unified team is comprised of teenagers from all eight high schools in Delaware County who are committed to living an alcohol-free, tobacco-free, and drug-free lifestyle.

Lifelong Learners: Viet Nam—Fifty Years Later **November 5, 3:00 PM**

Fifty years after the Viet Nam War, Gerald Waite, research fellow for Peace and Conflict Studies, will lead the group in looking back on one of our most controversial conflicts and the impact it had on the country.

ORGANIZATIONS

International Justice Mission

IJM is a global organization that protects the poor from violence in the developing world. IJM fights by rescuing victims, bringing criminals to justice, restoring survivors, and strengthening justice systems.

Cardinal Kitchen

Cardinal Kitchen is Ball State University's campus food pantry. The pantry is located on the second floor of the Multicultural Center and is available for use to all undergraduate and graduate students. The pantry is open the last three Tuesdays of every month from 5:00-8:00PM. Its mission is to ensure that no Ball State student goes hungry on our campus.

MOSAIC

MOSAIC is a social justice peer education program whose mission is to engage undergraduate students in open dialogues focused on diversity and social justice topics to promote awareness, change, and inter-group understanding. They can be contacted through the multicultural center, at mc2@bsu.edu for more information.

Feminists for Action

Feminists for Action is a group dedicated to the empowerment of women, men, and children through advocacy and education. They strive to educate others about issues in the global, national, and community level. They encourage thought-provoking discussions and work to organize events to benefit feminist causes. FA meets Tuesdays at 6:00PM in Schwartz Digital Viewing Room in Bracken Library.

Ethnic Theatre Alliance

The purpose of Ethnic Theatre Alliance is to explore worldviews of cultures, diversity, and social justice in order to educate members through Fine Arts. They do this in accordance with the Ball State University mission to create a community for the members to learn and develop worldview cultures so they may become better artists and people. They can be contacted through the Ball State Theatre department at theatrestu@bsu.edu for more information.

OFF-CAMPUS GROUPS

- A Better Way
- AWAKEN
- Edible Muncie of Delaware County
- Islamic Center
- Muncie Action Plan
- Muncie Human Rights Commission
- Muncie Interfaith Fellowship
- Muncie OUTreach
- National Alliance on Mental Illness
- YWCA
- Whitely Community Council
- United Way of Delaware County
- Blood N Fire
- Ross Community Center

ORGANIZATIONS CONTINUED

Student Action Team

SAT is an organization made up of general members and housing and residence life representatives. This organization is dedicated to volunteering and supporting Ball State University.

Spectrum

Spectrum's goal is to provide an anonymous, healthy and safe place for Ball State University students and surrounding communities who are discovering their sexual orientation to help find an understanding network of support. Spectrum meets Thursdays at 8:00 PM in SC 310.

Students for Life

Ball State Students for Life (BSSFL) is committed to the protection of all human life; from conception until natural death. They strive to educate members and the Ball State University community about why they value life in all its forms. They strive to respond with love, compassion, and support to those who suffer from restrictions of life. BSSFL meets every other Monday at 6:00PM in ETRC2 which is in the basement of Bracken Library.

Call to Action

Call to Action (CTA) is a student organization at Ball State looking to educate and create awareness of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) political issues at the local, state, and federal levels in order to empower students to take positive action towards equality for LGBT individuals and to influence others to take positive action. CTA has meetings on Mondays at 7:30PM in Teacher's College room 108.

BSU COUNSELING CENTER SUPPORT GROUPS

Every year, hundreds of students, faculty, and staff members use the services of the Counseling Center at BSU. This comprehensive services office provides free and confidential psychological and career resources to students. Call (765) 285-1736 or stop by Lucina Hall, Room 320.



Understanding Self and Others

Group members explore patterns of relating to self and others by discovering understanding and acceptance of themselves and others. Discussions vary greatly from depression, anxiety, relationships, family concerns, eating issues, alcohol abuse and/or personal growth. The groups thrive on diversity as members discover the common bond through emotional experiences. This group meets weekly and has sessions two times per week: Mondays 3:00-4:15PM & Wednesdays 3:00-4:15PM. The start date will be announced soon.

Weight Not, Want Not

Weight Not, Want Not is a supportive group for women with eating disorders or body image struggles who want to explore effective ways of coping. Its time is to be determined by availability of group members.

Safe Haven

This therapy group provides a safe place for LGBT students to explore and discuss patterns of relating to self and others by discovering understanding and acceptance of themselves and others. Topics of discussion vary greatly from coming out, finding support, relationships, family concerns, depression, anxiety, and/or personal growth. Safe Haven meets every Wednesday 3-4:15PM.

Surviving and Thriving

Surviving and Thriving is aimed to help sexual assault survivors. In this group, students share their experiences, find ways to cope, and gain perspective. This group meets Thursdays 3-4PM.

Loss and Grief

This group aims to provide a supportive environment that includes discussions about normal grief and loss and the tasks involved in the grieving process. Times and start date will be announced shortly.

Building Resilience

This four week workshop helps you learn useful skills to empower you to build resiliency when things feel out of control. Meets on Mondays 4:00-5:00PM.

Owning Your Ups & Downs

This 4 week skills group will help you build and practice your ability to manage stressful situations through focusing on how to utilize and implement 4 new healthy coping strategies. This group meets Tuesdays at 4 PM starting 9/10/19.

ABOUT US

The Center for Peace and Conflict Studies is an interdisciplinary center whose mission is to pursue research on structural, cultural, and direct forms of violence and conflict; to implement nonviolent strategies to resolve conflict; to offer mediation services to individuals, groups, and organizations; and to train people in conflict resolution, mediation, peace-building, leadership, meditation, and sportspersonship skills. The center also pursues public diplomacy, sports diplomacy, and cultural exchange as part of local, regional, national, and international projects designed to promote mutual understanding, appreciation, cooperation, and respect. Our services include monthly events, newsletters, the Muncie Interfaith Fellowship, meditation classes, mediation training and services.

Staff Members

Director: Lawrence Gerstein, Ph.D.

Research Fellow: Gerald Waite, M.A.

Curriculum Coordinator: Steven Hall, Ph.D.

Outreach Coordinator: Beth Messner, Ph.D.

Graduate Assistant: Aashna Banerjee

Fall 2019 Interns: Mylie Brennan, Michael Cottone, and Audrey Loomis

To include your events in the newsletter, please write to abanerjee@bsu.edu

Come visit us!

Address: Our office is located at 310 McKinley Avenue, Muncie, 47306.

We are the white house across the street from the campus shuttle bus stop at the BSU Student Center!

Our doors are open:

Mon/Wed: 9 AM—4 PM

Tues/Thur: 9 AM—1 PM; 2 PM—4 PM

Fri: 10 AM—2 PM



Follow us!

