



# Boston Research Center for the 21st Century



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Artful Ideas, Action  
for a Better World**

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## SAVE THE DATE!

**September 29, 2007**

**4th Annual Forum for  
Intercultural Dialogue**

**See page 2 for details.**



**Sarah Wider spoke with passion about the need  
for imagination in our world today.**

## THE THIRD ANNUAL IKEDA FORUM FOR INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE

### Emerson and the Power of Imagination

**W**hat can we learn from Ralph Waldo Emerson about how to live in the world today? How might imagination help us to envision—and realize—possibilities for our country? The 3rd Annual Ikeda Forum for Intercultural Dialogue spoke to these essential questions in the fall of 2006 with a two-day seminar and a public forum that attracted over 150 participants.

The public forum began with BRC executive director Ginny Benson's greeting and a welcome from president Masao Yokota who shared a memory of a late night walk many years ago with the Center's founder, Daisaku Ikeda. High above the mountain where a group of students stood with Ikeda, a crescent moon glowed in the night sky.

"Like the intellect, this moon is both sharp and bright," Ikeda remarked, before posing this question: "Which side of this moon will you emulate? Will you cut peoples' feelings with sharpness or illuminate their potential with brightness?"

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## Education That Connects for a New Century of Learning

AMERICAN CURRICULUM FRAMEWORKS IN THE UNITED STATES are largely shaped by a competitive culture of high-stakes testing; and tests, as we know, are designed by committees appointed by policy-makers. In the end, teaching and learning are too often driven by politics, not humanistic concerns. Is there a better way to approach curriculum content? Many people think so, including Frank H. T. Rhodes, president emeritus of Cornell University. In a recent commentary published in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, Rhodes proposed sustainability as an organizing principle, asserting,

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*“Each friend represents a world in us, a world possibly not born until they arrive, and it is only by this meeting that a new world is born.” — Anaïs Nin*

I’m always intrigued by a person whose career path is not a straight line, probably because my own life path is a patchwork quilt. How do they put it all together? It takes a certain breadth and depth to traverse the gaps between organizations and functions and land on your feet, a bigger person. Our new publications

manager, Sahana Dharmapuri, moved to Washington, D.C., after earning two masters degrees from the University of Chicago in 1992, and became the Director of Congressional Relations for the Center for Middle East Peace, then took on media relations for Ashoka, and finally served as a Gender and Conflict Advisor at USAID. She finds peacemaking to be the connecting thread in her jobs—and in her life experience. Sahana strongly believes that people today want to learn how to create a more peaceful world. It’s just a matter of reaching them on their own wavelength. Welcome, Sahana!



Sahana Dharmapuri

*“Nobody sees a flower, really. It is so small we haven’t time, and to see takes time like to have a friend takes time.” — Georgia O’Keeffe*

We will miss Patti Marxsen as she heads off to join her new husband in the mountains of Switzerland. Our time together, more than six years, has built a friendship strong enough to span the Atlantic. Meanwhile, Patti’s literary sensibility—the time she always took to see the flower and paint it into her writing—will remain as large in our memory as the blossoms on an O’Keeffe canvas.

If you enjoy reading about last year’s Ikeda Forum on Emerson and the Power of Imagination in this issue, you won’t want to miss our next forum this coming September, in which we will explore the transformative power of friendship. At a time in history when the leaders of our country are trying to use threats rather than friendship to establish power, we can learn from a different kind of leadership pioneered by women in the U.S., past and present. As economist Kenneth Boulding argued in his 1990 book *Three Faces of Power*, it’s a grave mistake for a nation or an individual to rely on “threat” power, such as military force, to gain influence. “Integrative” power, the power to create relationships and bring people together is far more effective in establishing one’s legitimacy, he asserted, than military or economic power. Integrative power meets the deep need for human bonding. This kind of power can engender courage in the face of difference in each one of us—male or female, rich or poor.

Finally, it is my great pleasure to announce the publication of our latest book by Teacher’s College Press, *Ethical Visions of Education: Philosophies in Practice*, edited by our friend and colleague Professor David Hansen.

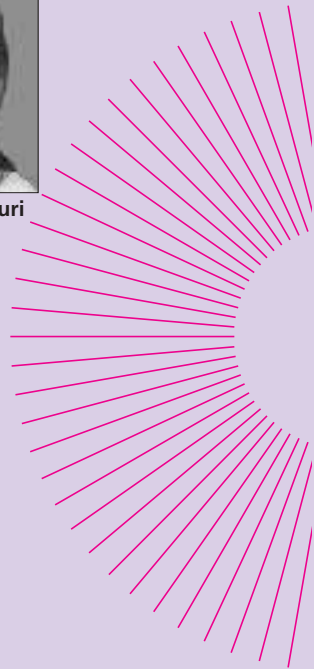
Virginia Benson, Executive Director

**The Ikeda Forum  
for Intercultural Dialogue  
WOMEN AND  
THE POWER OF FRIENDSHIP**

**Saturday, September 29, 2007  
9:00am – 5:00pm**

This year’s forum will focus on women’s leadership for social change and the transformative power of friendship across culture, race, and class differences.

We will highlight examples of women in the 19th century and emerging women leaders today.



## Meditation on Relocation

My father had a way of looking back at you just as he was shifting his attention to something else. His gaze would linger for a moment, conveying an unspoken reluctance to let go. Twenty-five years after his death, this gesture figures into my deepest memories of him. Those split seconds functioned—for him and for me too—as an almost imperceptible boundary between two realities, as moments of relocation.

My childhood is framed by such moments. There I am with my mother and sister in 1962, waving as Daddy's train left Texas in the glare of a hot sun. He was off to Korea for a year on orders from the U.S. Army and we knew we would miss him. A year later, I remember staring through the shadows of mesquite trees at a big, starry sky. That day, everything in our household had been wrapped, packed, and put on a truck destined for South Carolina. What life would be like there was anyone's guess. What I did know was that life in Texas at the outer limit of a modern subdivision bordering a creek and a field of bluebonnets was over. As the hours passed, I could feel it becoming mere memory.

My nomadic existence continued as a young faculty wife in the 1970s. When my then husband got a tenure-track position in 1979, I geared up for yet another moving day to get us from a small college town in central Alabama to Lexington, Kentucky.



After lunch with good friends who had spent hours in August heat helping us load a twenty-four-foot truck, my seven year-old son stepped into a hole in someone's yard that turned out to be a hornet's nest. This terrifying event brought all relocation activity to a standstill.

The next day, strength regained and truck fully loaded, we prepared to set off as a caravan with me driving two kids (one drowsy with pain medication) and an indignant cat in our car while Bill took charge of the truck. There were hugs, kisses, and tears, and then... the truck failed to start. We were caught between realities, pulled ahead by the momentum of farewell but held back by a stalled engine. In the end, I drove north with my restless passengers, leaving a young professor and weary friends with the chore of unloading and reloading our worldly goods onto a new truck.

Relocation is like walking through a prism, through bright colors and shards of light. The irresistible beauty of something new beckons. But obstacles, like the ones we met on our exit from Alabama, are inevitable. The sadness of farewell is inevitable, too. Whether this perspective constitutes resignation to a fragmented life or the capacity to embrace life as a mosaic of experience depends completely on mental attitude.

As I write, over six years of life and work at the Boston Research Center are shifting through the prism of relocation. From my office on the edge of Harvard Square, I find myself admiring the play of light on the old stone church outside my window. I hear familiar voices and laughter that will soon cease to be part of my daily life. In my own version of my father's lingering gaze, I find myself looking back even as I move toward a new life in Switzerland with a wonderful partner. Oddly enough, I will live in a town I visited in 1955 with my family, a place where time, memory, and sensation intersect along the River Aare. For a change, my new world contains flickers of a past and a sense of coming full circle, as well as the promise of an enriching future. If I know anything, it's how to move. Just give me a moment to shift my gaze, a split second of reflection, a final glance at you before I go.

—Patti M. Marxsen  
*BRC Publications Manager*  
*November 2000–March 2007*



Community builders got to know each other through small dialogues within the larger circle.

## THE BOSTON RESEARCH CENTER LEARNING CIRCLE: AN EXPERIMENT IN “LIVED COMMUNITY”

FROM THE FALL OF 2004 TO THE SPRING OF 2006, seventeen Boston area community builders from diverse backgrounds came together for a series of one- and two-day sessions at the Boston Research Center (BRC) to explore the meaning of community and share their experience and skills. The goal of this experiment was to see whether the

were invited to initiate the group into this methodology as its foundational practice. After an intense four-day experience of the peacemaking circle in October of 2004 with Harold and Gwen serving as “keepers,” participants found themselves deeply moved and committed to doing something together, but uncertain about what that “something” might be.

Being human together “in a good way” took on new meaning and challenge thanks to the peacemaking circle. “What is a living community?” they asked. “Can we experience it ourselves?” Gradually, the members of the BRC Learning Circle on Community Building (BRC-LC) began to build community in real time, drawing on their collective reservoir of expertise as needed to deepen the connections they felt with each other. Building their own community became an end in itself.

In the months that followed, the BRC-LC explored the joy—and intense struggle—of this aspiration. The all-inclusive peacemaking circle sometimes gave way to dialogue in smaller “support groups” and pairs.

Rotating groups of planners met between sessions to organize each meeting. People took turns “keeping” the circle and a buddy system of randomly chosen “triads” built group solidarity in between the formal sessions. Learning Circle members made use of practically every method imaginable—from song, music, dance, rituals, laughing exercises, art work, and group poetry to appreciative inquiry, nonviolent communication, visioning, difficult conversations, open space technology, and pedagogy of the oppressed. Relational psychology, spiritual practices, community organizing and peace activism informed the circle in larger ways. As two years of “lived community” drew to a close in the spring of 2006, the BRC-LC’s attention turned to the outside world in earnest. Its members trained their sights on the historical moment, asking themselves, “What kind of healing is needed in the world right now?”

Having encountered the jagged edges of race, class, gender, and cultural differences during their time together, participants were acutely aware of the many dimensions of this question and

**According to “relational activism,” social change needs to happen in the context of community building and the deepening of relationships among all the people involved.**

group could arrive at insights that would be helpful to others at a time when U.S. national leaders were acting out of a deepening sense of isolation and fear in the world community.

Because the BRC staff had been impressed with the power of the peacemaking circle based on indigenous understandings of interconnectedness, Tlingit elder Harold Gatensby and circle trainers Gwen Chandler-Rhivers and Sayra Pinto

found the process of reflecting on it deeply motivating. Some had already joined forces spontaneously outside the circle to run workshops together. Some had taken their learning into their own work, communities, and family lives. Two kindred spirits who had met and bonded through the BRC-LC coined the term “relational activism” and decided to explore this concept in greater depth. According to “relational activism,” social change needs to happen in the context of community building and the deepening of relationships among all the people involved.

This idea was summed up nicely by an observation one of them had heard from David Bucara, a survivor of the Rwandan genocide who became a peace activist. He said authentic social change happens only if it’s organized “slowly, deeply, and in small groups.”

In a concluding discussion, several of the BRC-LC members shared what they had learned from their experience in intentional community and how they were using this learning in their lives and work. Personal transformations included becoming more skilled at creating safe spaces for honest dialogue, deepening the capacity to love and be fully present to others in pain, feeling empowered to push beyond the limits of academic convention in teaching and writing, and finding greater courage to stand by those ostracized by a group.

Some members pointed to the need for a spiritual base on which to build community and remarked on the healing power of choosing an indigenous practice as foundational, especially in the United States. There was a sense, too, that the defining moments of their exploration reached

spiritual depth and created lasting, dynamic value. Such deepening of experience occurred when someone was able to be truly authentic and make themselves vulnerable to others without being rejected, ignored, or judged. When the group was able to listen deeply and hold that person’s pain and honesty without retreating or pulling away, this was when the “grace” of deep community happened, observed one of the circle members.

Though their formal experiment has ended, BRC-LC members plan to keep their connections alive through occasional gatherings. For more information, please go to [www.brc21.org/resources/html](http://www.brc21.org/resources/html).

—Virginia Benson



## NEWS & NOTES

### Daisaku Ikeda’s 2007 Peace Proposal

The 25th annual Peace Proposal by SGI founder Daisaku Ikeda calls for a re-energized effort to eliminate nuclear weapons and cites the 50th anniversary of second SGI president Josei Toda’s 1957 impassioned statement: “I advocate that those who venture to use nuclear weapons, irrespective of their nationality or whether their country is victorious or defeated, be sentenced to death without exception.”

His penetrating insight was rooted in the universal plane of human life, transcending differences of ideology and social system. It laid bare the essence of these apocalyptic weapons whose lethal destructiveness could put an end to human civilization and even to humankind’s continued existence as a species.

Returning to a theme from last year’s proposal, Ikeda also advocates for stronger relations between Asian nations, particularly between Japan and China, and proposes a ten-year program beginning with the 2008 Beijing Olympics to encourage friendship on many different levels. Expanding on this, Ikeda proposed the creation of an East Asian environmental and development organization that might eventually point the way toward the formation of an Asian Union.

To order your complimentary copy of the 2007 Peace Proposal, please contact the Center at 617-491-1090 or email us at [pubs@brc21.org](mailto:pubs@brc21.org).



### Soka University of Japan UN Club Visit

Twenty-seven students from the UN Club of Soka University of Japan visited the BRC on February 15th where they engaged in an enlightening sharing of ideas and dialogue with Masa Hagiya and Ginny Benson. During their two-week trip to the US, they also spent time in NYC where they visited UN Headquarters. Each year, the student group makes a trip to the United States to learn about international relations and promote peace.



## The Quest for Personhood

A CONVERSATION WITH David Hansen

David Hansen is Professor and Director of the Philosophy and Education program at Teachers College, Columbia University. Ever since his decade of service as director of a secondary teacher education program at the University of Illinois at Chicago, Hansen has been particularly interested in the moral dimensions of teaching and teacher education. This interest is part of a larger project to re-imagine the humanistic roots of education in an era that, all too often, reduces education to a mere means to an end. Hansen's books include *The Call to Teach* (1995) and *Exploring the Moral Heart of Teaching: Toward a Teacher's Creed* (2001). He is the editor of the Center's recent book, *Ethical Visions of Education: Philosophies in Practice* (Teachers College Press, 2007) and of *John Dewey and Our Educational Prospect: A Critical Engagement with Dewey's Democracy and Education* (SUNY Press, 2006). He was interviewed by BRC publications manager Patti Marxsen.

**PM:** *How did you come to be a philosopher of education?*

**DH:** The education side began, for me, with being a teacher and working with children and youth. I started teaching when I was in high school—coaching and tutoring—and I've been teaching ever since. The philosophy side came from wanting to understand my experience as a teacher. That's part of the reason I went to graduate school. This gave me a chance to understand what had been happening in my life as a teacher and, indeed, as a student.

Woven into this was also a long-standing affection for books and reading and ideas and thinking. My mother played a very important role there because she was always very keen on reading. There were lots of books all over the place in our house. And later, after I'd grown up, my mother and I had amazing conversations about books.

**PM:** *Did you ever have the desire to drop the "education" part and become that most mysterious thing: "a philosopher"?*

**DH:** Oh yes, probably a 1,000 times! Every time I read one of Plato's *Dialogues* or something by Emerson or Dewey I find such tremendous intellectual wonder and curiosity. Texts like these contain so much of the joy of thinking right on the page.

**PM:** *Is educational philosophy more practical, somehow, than the big questions that people like you've just mentioned address in their work?*

**DH:** Here at Teachers College, our program is called Philosophy and Education, not Philosophy of Education. I like that "and" and I like what it stands for, which is a love of ideas and a love of texts as well as a love of education and a love of making a difference in the world.

**PM:** *Do you have favorite memories of any of your teachers?*

**DH:** I had a lot of fascinating teachers, including a man named Philip Jackson from the University of Chicago. Several colleagues and I are editing a volume on his work entitled *To Watch the Water Clear: Philip W. Jackson and the Practice of Education*. He was my mentor for my doctoral

dissertation and quite a Socratic presence, a real philosopher. But then there was also Mrs. Yondorf, my twelfth grade English teacher who was extraordinary, though low-key—an undramatic person with a soft voice. She had a relentless passion for the novels we were reading and modeled how to read literature carefully.

**PM:** *In your book entitled Exploring the Moral Heart of Teaching: Toward a Teacher's Creed (Teachers College Press, 2001) you state that "a teacher's moral and intellectual attentiveness to students is not a means to an end." Rather, you argue that a teacher needs to be engaged in a moral and intellectual relationship with each student "because this is what it means to be a teacher." How does this distinction alter what happens in the classroom?*

**DH:** One way to answer that is that it alters the teacher's sense of presence in the classroom. In other words I think it transforms him or her from being a "paid functionary" into a purposive human being, a person who can make a difference in the humanity of students as well as in



*Our American “can-do” culture exists in tension with the life of the mind, and the life of the heart.*

.....

their knowledge. When a teacher is engaged like that, as Mrs. Yondorf was, the person really comes to occupy the role of teacher.

*PM: Can this kind of teaching be taught?*

**DH:** Not directly. I don’t think it’s the kind of thing that you can literally pass over to another person. But what we can do in teacher education programs is create a set of experiences for would-be teachers so that over the course of time, they come into a deep connection with this vision of teaching.

*PM: Does this approach to education—and teacher education—relate to Dewey’s idea of experience as being the true source of knowledge and meaning in our lives?*

**DH:** Yes, and in *The Moral Heart of Teaching* I spend some time exploring Dewey’s idea of setting up the right kind of environment for students on the principle that teachers don’t “give” knowledge to students but create opportunities. Teachers are not “miracle workers” and education comes from the curriculum you set up, the methods you use, the physical structure of the classroom itself, and so forth. It’s a whole array of things that makes learning possible.

*PM: Among those many determinants of how students learn, you emphasize a particular attitude of responsibility that teachers must have when you write in The Moral Heart of Teaching about the responsibility teachers have to present themselves as fully engaged persons in the classroom. If I may quote you: “To understand what it means to really know and believe something constitutes yet another striking image of an educated and growing human being.” How does the prevailing approach to teachers in the United States undermine this sense of moral responsibility?*

**DH:** It’s a difficult time for teachers at all levels of the system and, I think, it always has been. Our American

“can-do” culture exists in tension with the life of the mind, and the life of the heart. It’s also a culture that treats many things, even education, as a means-to-an-end. All of this threatens to drive out the richer sense of what it means to become educated and what it means to teach as well.

*PM: What is the link between knowledge and information and how can we nurture both in young people?*

**DH:** First of all, we have to reflect on the meaning of knowledge and realize that there is a distinction between knowledge and information. Oftentimes, there’s a presumption that education means the acquisition of information. Knowledge is larger than that. And the verb *to know* points to something much deeper and richer than facts and information.

*PM: The French have two different verbs: savoir, for the knowledge of facts, and connaître for the deeper sense of being truly familiar with someone or something.*

**DH:** That’s right, and it’s a nice way to build that distinction into a culture. And good teachers have both and want their students to acquire the richer sense of “knowing their way about” art or math or literature or biology. And this includes a rich notion of imagination because “becoming familiar” calls on our powers of imagination.

*PM: In your Introduction to Ethical Visions of Education: Philosophies in Practice, you take some time to define the meaning of another word: idea. Noting that ideas “are essential for intelligent and humane action,” you also take care to distinguish ideas from facts and information. But the*

*statement that struck me is that “ideas remain ‘ideas’ only if they are dynamic and subject to change.” How can we base the practice of education on something as dynamic and changeable as ideas?*

**DH:** For an idea to be dynamic or in movement does not imply it lacks substance or power. But if we harden ideas we literally cement thinking in place, which is anti-educational and anti-humane. Living ideas evolve and grow, just as do human beings. An idea like “democratic education,” for example, should be open to inquiry. We shouldn’t limit a person’s right to question that idea, for that would be undemocratic. In a genuinely democratic society the very meaning of the concept will undergo transformation. An idea is not a fact; it needs to be alive and open to question.

*PM: And yet in so many areas of education, there doesn’t seem to be a consensus of thought. One might even say that there doesn’t seem to be reliable knowledge in spite of a century of study and research and day-to-day practice. Are educational ideas particularly open to question for some reason?*

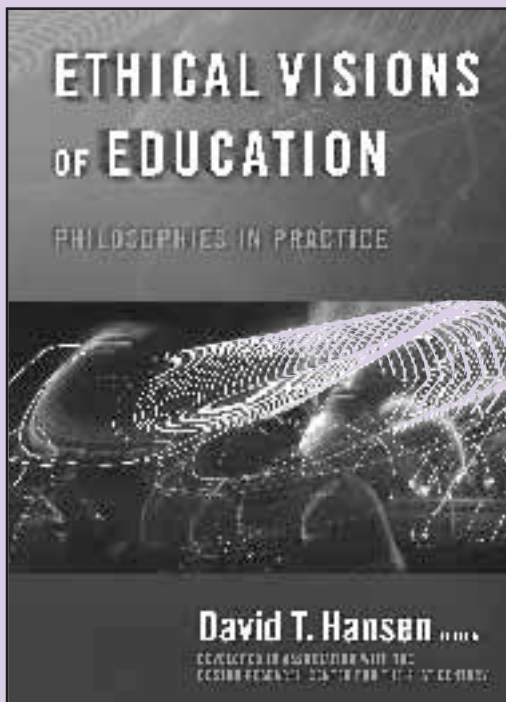
**DH:** I think all human practices—like teaching and nursing, for example—are open to this criticism. But because they’re so human and so intimately connected to the direction of our lives, they cannot be blueprinted. And so there is a necessary space for dialogue and conversation where multiple points of view are expressed. One of the illnesses of our culture is that we don’t really engage in conversation about these things. We just express our position and go home. One of the best things about *Ethical Visions of Education* is that, in many ways, it represents a commitment to keep intelligent conversation going.

*PM: It also offers an international perspective. In fact, it offers ten perspectives from people who struggled*

# BOOK TALK

ANNOUNCING

## *Ethical Visions of Education*



THE CENTER IS PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE the publication of *Ethical Visions of Education: Philosophies in Practice* by Teachers College Press. Editor David T. Hansen of Teachers College, Columbia University, spoke at Mount Wachusett Community College on February 6 and at the Center on February 13, emphasizing the promise educational philosophy holds for shifting the discourse on education to more humanistic concerns.

“One of the best things about *Ethical Visions of Education* is that, in many ways, it represents a commitment to keep intelligent conversation going across generations, regardless of political or economic circumstances,” Hansen says in his *Guest Interview* (See page 6). With the aim of sparking such intelligent conversation, *Ethical Visions* includes ten chapters, each on a prominent twentieth-century educator/philosopher whose collective wisdom and experience reflect global struggles. The philosophers included are Jane Addams (United States) John Dewey (United States), W.E.B. Du Bois (United States), Paulo Friere (Brazil), Tsunesaburo Makguchi (Japan), Maria Montessori (Italy), Albert Schweitzer (Alsace), Rudolf Steiner (Austria), Rabindranath Tagore (India), and Tao Xingzhi (China).

The book also includes a substantive introduction by Professor Hansen in which he reflects on the power of ideas and individuals to effect change: “Ideas do not spring from a vacuum, and they are never inevitable,” he says. “They are not like the wind, the tide, or the rising and setting of the sun. They do not derive from nature’s inexorable course. Rather, ideas take form through the initiative of individual persons who seek to respond to particular concerns, problems, fears, and hopes. Ideas originate with human beings, not impersonal forces. The cliché that ideas have consequences harbors a truth that is all too easy to overlook as people go about their daily affairs: what individual persons think and do can make a genuine difference in the course of events. Mind and imagination can transform the quality of life.”

For a summary of David Hansen’s talk at the BRC, an interview with him, and order information, please go to [www.brc21.org/books.ftrd.html](http://www.brc21.org/books.ftrd.html). Professors currently teaching courses for which this book might be appropriate will find a link on the Book Page of our website for information about free examination copies.



David Hansen at the BRC in February.

# BOOK TALK



Elise Boulding and Mary Catherine Bateson are among the ten women interviewed in *VOICES*, the Center's new online publication.

## VOICES

### A New Online Publication on Women's Leadership

IMAGINE HAVING TIME to sit down and talk with ten women working in a variety of domains on some of the world's most mind-boggling challenges: the economics of consumption, the exploitation of our environment, social healing, nuclear proliferation, youth development, growing older. Over the past six years, BRC publications manager Patti Marxsen has had that opportunity. Interviews with ten women leaders have been collected into a new online publication entitled *VOICES: Talking With Women Who Care About Our World*. All you have to do to get your copy is go to [www.brc21.org/ldrshp.html](http://www.brc21.org/ldrshp.html) and download the PDF.

### COMING SOON!

### A 10th Anniversary Edition of *Subverting Hatred: The Challenge of Nonviolence in Religious Traditions* edited by Daniel Smith-Christopher

THE CENTER'S MOST POPULAR BOOK WITH COLLEGE STUDENTS will soon be celebrating a very special birthday. By spring of 2008, an anniversary edition of *Subverting Hatred* published by Orbis Books will be available to students. This title has been adopted as supplemental reading in 185 courses since 1998 at colleges and universities as diverse as Georgetown University, Harvard University (Continuing Education), Stanford University, Tufts University, and the Union Theological Seminary in New York City. For the new edition, editor Daniel Smith-Christopher of Loyola Marymount University has written a substantive introduction, developed study questions for all chapters, and added a new chapter on Islam as well as a new chapter on indigenous religion. Donald K. Swearer, director of the Center for the Study of World Religion at the Harvard Divinity School, has contributed a thoughtful epilogue. For updates and further information, please stay tuned to [www.brc21.org/books.html](http://www.brc21.org/books.html).



### Going Global with Translations

*Educating Citizens for Global Awareness*, edited by Nel Noddings, will soon be read in China. Unifacmanu Trading Co., Ltd., in Taiwan is working with Professor Lian-Hwang Chiu from Indiana University in Kokomo and Dr. Yong-Chih Lin, a post-graduate researcher at Cornell University, to bring out a translation of the book in the spring of 2007.

In 2006, an Indonesian edition of *Subverting Hatred*, edited by Daniel Smith-Christopher, was published by Kanisius College, a well-known Jesuit college in Jakarta. The title was slightly revised for this edition and translates as *Sharper Than the Sword: Religious Reflections About the Paradox of Violence*.



We are always happy to put translators in touch with the outside publishers of our books. Please email or call the publications office if you have a project and a foreign publisher in mind. ☺



Many young people participated in the dialogue following Professor Wider's keynote.

## Emerson and the Power of Imagination

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

For Yokota, this memory reminded him of how imagination can be constructive or destructive depending on one's generosity of spirit. The anecdote also recalled Ikeda's poetic sensibility rooted in Nature and his practical affinity with Emerson's way of looking at the world. "We live by our imaginations, by our admirations, by our sentiments," said Emerson, as if the possibilities of each moment and our interactions with others constantly offer new ways of being in the world.

Addressing the theme of possibility, Andrew Gebert read from "Sun of *Jiyu*," a poem by Daisaku Ikeda. *Jiyu*, Gebert explained, is a word that suggests emerging from the Earth and the universal reality of a vast human potential or compassionate nature rooted in each life. The voice of the poem poses a critical question to America:

*What is to become of the  
spirit of your nation  
fostered by so many people of  
wisdom and philosophy?*

In his essay "Politics," Emerson, too, recognizes the role of enlightened, thoughtful individuals in creating this United States. Emerson encourages readers to look deeply and appreciate the influence of such individuals on the nation's institutions: "In dealing with the State, we ought to remember that its institutions are not . . . superior to the citizen: that every one of them was once the act of a single man." Individuals, Emerson wrote, can remake and advance these institutions, but only with proper education: "If men can be educated, the institutions will share their improvement, and the moral sentiment will write the law of the land." Thus, Emerson conceives of individual rights finding their highest expression in the collective. In this, there is a strong link between Emerson's philosophy of democracy and the humanistic thought of Ikeda that emphasizes self-cultivation as the motivating force for social and political advances.

After a musical interlude from a remarkable string quartet of friends from Boston's New England Conservatory, Professor Sarah Wider

of Colgate University delivered her keynote entitled "Calling the Imagination Home: Traveling with Emerson on a Train of Thought." Her remarks focused on how human imagination can address the global reality of war and violence. Relying on the idea of "journey" as a metaphor, Wider carried the audience through a landscape of associations to arrive at stark realities and a few essential questions.

Wider quoted Emerson on children, "If we can touch the imagination, we serve them," and linked this thought to the reality of children who will be born today in Baghdad, Iraq. "Yes," she added, "we must imagine the reality of children continuing to be born in Baghdad." Considering the current state of war and conflict in the world, Wider compellingly posed this question to the powers of the warring world: "Is that all you could imagine? Meeting violence with violence? Why, that takes no imagination at all."

She then spoke directly to the audience: "Perhaps you don't feel that far from the world Emerson described in the mid-1860s when he said that 'The prudential and economical tone of society starves the imagination.'" Sensing an atmosphere of agreement, she went on to quote from Daisaku Ikeda's poem "Fighting for Peace":



Nathanael Faredh Mahluli accompanied a reading by William Henry Lewis.

*where people are united  
in the richness of their hearts,  
there peace exists  
as a tangible reality.*

Wider spoke in a language of possibility, but it was “tangible reality” made possible through “the power of imagination” that drove her along the journey of her keynote. Afterward, a thoughtful dialogue with the audience focused on the question of an “ethics of imagination,” the relationship between imagination and action, and the need for cultivation of a life-affirming imagination in our public school system.

The afternoon presentations explored diverse perspectives, with each activating the imagination. A summer theater project about justice from Cambridge Rindge and Latin High School (CRLHS) was introduced by Harvard Graduate School of Education student Radhika Rao: “Imagination is spiritual, intellectual, and physical. Theater allows us to imagine what it’s like to be someone else, and so it creates a space for public conversations.” CRLHS teacher Betsy Bard developed the community-based theater group that incorporates elements of role-play, improvisation, video, and self-observation to activate the moral imagination of students. The students presentation explored moral dilemmas resolved through the power of friendship.

Author and educator Jeannette Armstrong, a member of the Okanagan Syilx Nation, revealed how Emerson is “convergent with the way of knowledge of my people.” Focusing on deep and complex meanings of the word “imagination,” she related a “teaching story” about the emergence of the turtle from dark river water into light. Armstrong explained that for the Okanagan, imagination is organic, embedded in the diversity of life and inseparable from the process of exploring and understanding the perspectives of all in the community. “It’s not about imagining what could be, but what must be,” she said.



Over 150 people participated in the 3rd Annual Ikeda Forum convened by Professor Sarah Wider of Colgate University.

William Henry Lewis and saxophonist Nathanael Fareed Mahluli “performed” an abbreviated reading of Lewis’s short story, “Rossonian Days,” from his collection *I Got Somebody in Staunton*. This story, like Armstrong’s, created its own rhythmic language. The plot revolved around jazz musicians driving from Kansas City to Denver to play a “gig” at the Rossonian Auditorium. But the small story grew large as Lewis wove the history of jazz into a fast-moving road trip of dreams and destiny.

“Jazz is America’s gift to the world,” said Lewis, who demonstrated the dialogic power of words and music as he read to the music of Mahluli. Later, in conversation with the audience, Mahluli echoed Armstrong’s comments about the radical inclusivity of imagination for the Okanagan: “Jazz is the ultimate democratic process—not when it’s composed, but when there’s improvisation. What you speak in jazz eludes the spoken word. It’s the heart and the mind.”

Following these presentations, small-group dialogues focused on two essential questions:

- In what ways can we—individually and collectively—bring imagination more fully into our lives?
- How do you envision a healthy imagination contributing to social justice in the U.S?

“Like the intellect, this moon is both sharp and bright,” Ikeda remarked, before posing this question, “Which side of this moon will you emulate? Will you cut peoples’ feelings with sharpness or illuminate their potential with brightness?”

Andrew Gebert incorporated the essence of these rich conversations into an “improvisational poem” that he read at the end of the day, highlighting a new awareness of the power of listening to others as an integral part of the power of imagination. It was, after all, a day of many voices and, so, many voices found a way to be heard:

*When imaginations collide  
Hold the dissonance.  
Be able to be  
uncomfortable.  
Learning to hold the pain  
while not letting it  
destroy you.  
Learn not to fear pain  
but believe in all the good things  
that are born of it.*

—Patti M. Marxsen

For the complete text of Sarah Wider’s Keynote Lecture and the Closing Poem by Andrew Gebert, go to [www.brc21.org/events06.html](http://www.brc21.org/events06.html)

# Education That Connects for a New Century of Learning

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

“The concept of sustainability could provide a new foundation for the liberal arts and sciences.” Indeed, a small but visible shift in the discourse of educational reform is pointing toward curriculum development that is intercultural, interdisciplinary, and interconnected.

## Intercultural Understanding

Northern Ireland has been working on broadening social and cultural awareness since 1992 when two important cross-curricular themes were introduced into the statutory curriculum: Education for Mutual Understanding (EMU) and Cultural

“The concept of sustainability could provide a new foundation for the liberal arts and sciences.”

— Frank H. T. Rhodes

Heritage. Underlying these efforts was a deep desire to overcome the violence linked to sectarian divisions that had become the hallmark of life in Northern Ireland since “Bloody Sunday” on January 30, 1972. In the face of the ongoing reality of largely segregated schools, Northern Ireland has struggled with the challenges of civic education, the role of religion in education, students’ perceptions of human rights inside and outside of the classroom, and the need for social and emotional learning.



Nicholas Negroponte envisions user-friendly laptops in the hands of children everywhere.

Photo of computer, pages 1 and 12: One Laptop Per Child (OLPC) <http://wiki.laptop.org/>

In a talk delivered a few years ago at the American Educational Research Association, Ursula Birthistle of the University of Ulster explained, “It is widely recognized that in the sphere of human rights education or education for democracy, a didactic approach is totally inadequate, that the *context* is as important as *content*.” In other words, it’s not enough to “learn the rules” of good behavior. Instead, the school environment and decision-making process must both mirror and enhance each child’s lived experience. Time must be made and programs created that develop skills such as listening, cooperation, critical thinking, and problem solving.

An example of such a curriculum is *Speak Your Piece* developed by the University of Ulster School of Education, Ulster TV, and Britain’s Channel 4 television network. This series of TV and video programs provided a forum for open discussions between adolescents (ages 14-17) that touched on issues as far reaching as identity, culture, religion, politics, and violence. Another program, *Primary Values*, created a literacy education program for young children within the framework of personal, social, and civic development in

which they were encouraged to listen, reflect, and express their thoughts and feelings. Among other things, this program introduced young children to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child that, according to Birthistle, affirms each child’s right to a holistic education beyond academic knowledge.

## Interdisciplinary Learning

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child may provide for a holistic education. But what about a holistic approach to academic achievement? In American public schools, learning is typically divided into disconnected segments like History, Math, English, and Science. What if the categories were broadened so that the intersections of history and literature became common knowledge? What if the study of history included geography, ecology, and the artistic expression of different cultures?

A recent issue of the French newspaper supplement, *Le Monde de L’Education*, or *The World of Education*, was devoted to rethinking the organization of knowledge for students in the twenty-first century.

With an emphasis on the “New Humanities,” editors and contributors explored a list of twelve possible “subjects” that might be more useful and more interesting to young people than the current topic areas mentioned above:

- Ecology
- Internet
- Scientific culture
- Technical culture
- Anthropology
- Sociology
- The Culture of Justice
- Music
- Writing
- Plastic Arts
- Theater

Like Rhodes’s idea of building curriculum around sustainability (of the environment and everyone in it), this list illuminates the limitations of current curriculum goals. Anthropology, for example, could not be “taught” effectively without a deep understanding of how “old-fashioned” subjects interconnect. Nor could it be taught exclusively from a textbook. Film, dance, literature, science, geography, foreign languages, music, and person-to-person contact would be woven together. In short, the curriculum would have to become holistic.

According to Philippe Descola, chair of the department of anthropology at the Collège de France in Paris, anthropology is “indispensable knowledge for a good education” and, therefore, should be part of the curriculum beginning at the secondary level. Similar arguments could be made for other “subjects” listed above, like the Culture of Justice, Writing, or Ecology. With courses like these, knowledge would no longer be divided into mutually exclusive disciplines; and curriculum content would be measured against how broadly and deeply it connects the interests of humanity. Systemic thinking would be valued above a view of literature that canonizes a

few “geniuses” but leaves out stories told through personal letters or the history of cultures whose literature is oral. In such a world, history would be studied as much for its lessons of interconnection as for what it reveals about the struggle for power.

## Sharing the Possibilities

Despite advances in technology, interconnection in the Information Age remains a luxury for millions of people in developing countries who are often cut off from news, knowledge, information, markets, and opportunity. This absence of connection, or “digital divide,” is particularly severe on the continent of Africa where 14 percent of the world’s population make up a mere 2.3 percent of the world’s Internet users.

To address what can only be viewed as a form of discrimination, a Declaration of Principles was adopted at the first meeting of the World Summit on the Information Society in Geneva in 2003. The first paragraph of this important document affirms a “common desire and commitment to build a people-centered, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society, where everyone can create, access, utilize, and share information and knowledge.” But how can technology resources become accessible to everyone, and especially to young people growing up in the Third World?

Nicholas Negroponte, a successful business executive and co-founder of the Media Lab at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), seems to have at least part of the answer. His fast-moving initiative called “One Laptop per Child” (OLPC) started with a vision of how the world might change if affordable, child-friendly computers could be designed and delivered to children in

developing nations. Early in 2005, he announced OLPC at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, and later, in 2006, he unveiled a prototype at a major conference in Tunisia. Former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who was present at the unveiling, has called OLPC “a moving expression of global solidarity and corporate citizenship.” The colorful, Linux-based computer that will facilitate

“It’s a window into the world and a tool with which to think.”  
— Nicholas Negroponte

“peer-to-peer” networks and Internet access is expected to be available in 2007 at around \$150, thanks to the support of partners like Nortel Networks and Google.

Among the benefits, Negroponte sees laptops in the hands of children everywhere as both “a window into the world and a tool with which to think.” It will encourage curiosity, a sense of agency, and—of necessity—it will encourage literacy, a key to economic and social development.

“It’s an education project, not a laptop project,” Negroponte says. Taking a new approach to knowledge will mean a new approach to teaching and learning. It will also mean building new alliances among governments, NGOs, corporations, and philanthropists. The stakes are high. The possibilities are vast. If there is an irony in the goals of OLPC and in the other curriculum innovations mentioned here, it is that in order to offer an interconnected world to our children, we will have to be open to an extraordinary level of collaboration and connection ourselves.

—Patti M. Marxsen



## Guest Interview

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

*in difficult societies, in times of war, in poverty, against the odds. Why is it important for educators in the United States to explore such multiple perspectives on teaching and learning?*

**DH:** There are many reasons. The United States is an immensely powerful nation and a book like ours, in its own modest way, can help us think about using power wisely and humanely and for good ends. It can have this effect because it can show American students that we have a lot of solidarity with the rest of the world, so much more than we're aware of. Our tradition of American exceptionalism as a special place or a promised land can separate us from others, especially in the area of U.S. foreign policy where we see the dark side of this ideology of exceptionalism leading to violence and mayhem. A book like ours works against that and, instead, supports the other side of American culture that asks the question, "What IS special and different about the United States?"

*PM: How would you answer that question?*

**DH:** I think this has to do with the openness of America, with the absence of a fixed and final identity. This is a nation of immigrants and that suggests a certain kind of philosophy of life that can be enacted anywhere, not just in the United States. I think there is so much potential in this country to be a force for good in the world, and I think this book can make a contribution to that by helping readers see their own solidarity with humanity everywhere. We really do need to stop thinking of ourselves as "exceptional" and think more about what it means to be human, period. This country has some things to say about that question precisely because it brings together people from every corner of the globe.

*One of the best things about Ethical Visions of Education is that, in many ways, it represents a commitment to keep intelligent conversation going.*

.....

*PM: Among the chapters in Ethical Visions of Education, two are devoted to Asian philosophers: Tao Xingzhi of China, who studied with Dewey and dedicated his life to public education in China, and Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, whose philosophy of Value Creation is reflected today in the expansive system of Soka Education. Since you had the opportunity to travel to Japan and observe Soka schools firsthand last year, can you comment on what education in the West has to learn from Makiguchi in particular?*

**DH:** When I was in Japan, I found myself pondering my own reading of Makiguchi quite a lot. One thing that really stands out is the terrific focus in Soka schools on teachers and students, on the relationship between the two, but also on caring for teachers so that they can care for students. It's appalling how little care American culture has for the teachers of its children today; I'm just stunned sometimes by the lack of respect and the lack of appreciation, both of which often translate into difficult working conditions and low salaries. Makiguchi is very consistent on the need to care for teachers so that they can care for students. There's also the trajectory of Buddhism involved in Soka education with its resistance to materialism. In the world today, there's a lot of pressure to commercialize almost every aspect of human life, including education when it's viewed as job preparation and not human formation.

*PM: You have a sabbatical year coming up. Can you give a sense of what's next for you?*

**DH:** Well, one of the projects is very much related to the idea of making philosophy more accessible or understanding it as a more practical matter. It has to do with the "Art of Living," or a "Way of Life." This is a tradition of philosophy not as an academic discipline but truly as a guide to living. It holds that people can be philosophical about their lives, that they actually can determine the course of their lives, the kind of meaning they want to build into their lives. The question at the heart of this for me is, "What would it mean if we transformed our educational system so that children, youth, and adults were empowered to find guides to crafting meaningful lives."

*PM: Your question presupposes that we're not doing this.*

**DH:** That's right. We're not doing this and part of the reason has to do with the materialism of our culture. As we educate children, we always have to ask, "To what end?"

*PM: And this comes back to the over-arching question you've been exploring for some time, "What does it mean to be a person?"*

**DH:** That's an endlessly amazing and beautiful question to me. ☺



## EDITOR'S NOTE

What a pleasure it is to address the theme of "Exploring Education" as I edit my last BRC newsletter. This is where I started many years ago as a high school teacher of English and French. Somehow, my skills evolved into communications management for cultural and educational organizations. And later, as my understanding of the world expanded, my career path led to international concerns like public health, common values, and global citizenship.

Education is at the heart of all of these issues. As David Hansen reminds us, we need to be guided by a "moral compass." In the Center's new book, *Ethical Visions of Education: Philosophies in Practice*, Professor Hansen has created an important exploration of ten remarkable educators whose lives and work exemplify the value of a moral compass combined with the will to act.

The Ikeda Forum and Sarah Wider's keynote emphasize another essential aspect of education: imagination. "Increasingly, it would seem that the imagination is not touched within our schools. Increasingly the imagination is not touched within our daily lives," Professor Wider says as she sets off "Traveling with Emerson on a Train of Thought."

To these important perspectives, I've added a few of my own observations on "connection" as a promising criterion for education in the twenty-first century. In the ongoing process of reshaping education, we must learn to come at old questions from new angles and with new technologies in mind. And Ginny Benson's report on the BRC-LC reminds us that learning is an organic process that never ends. We learn together as we build our world in community with those around us.

—Patti M. Marxsen  
Publications Manager

## Mission Statement

The Boston Research Center for the 21st Century (BRC) is an international peace institute. The Center was founded in 1993 by Daisaku Ikeda, a peace activist and president of Soka Gakkai International (SGI), one of the most dynamic and diverse Buddhist organizations in the world. Inspired by the SGI's philosophy of value creation (Soka), the BRC works to build cultures of peace through dialogue and education. Our dialogue programs include public forums, scholarly seminars, and peace-making circles that are diverse and intergenerational. Through these programs, scholars and activists are able to forge unexpected connections, refresh their sense of purpose, and learn from each other in a spirit of camaraderie. The overarching goal of these gatherings is to contribute to a shift in U.S. culture from isolation, violence, and war to interconnectedness, nonviolence, and peace. The BRC also works to encourage the peaceful aspirations of young people through multi-author books published by academic presses. Our titles, such as *Buddhist Peacework*, *Subverting Hatred*, *Subverting Greed*, *Educating Citizens for Global Awareness*, and *Ethical Visions of Education*, introduce humanistic values and ideas that rarely make it into the typical curriculum. So far, they've been used as supplemental texts in over 400 college and university courses in the United States, Canada, and Japan.

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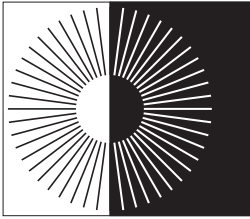
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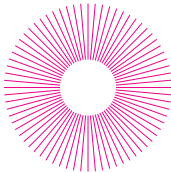


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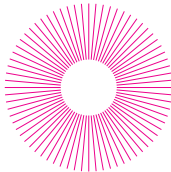
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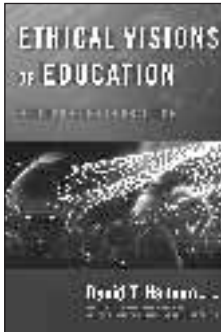
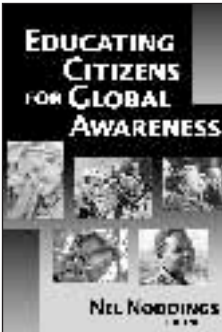
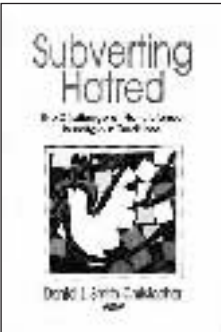


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