MARY HOCH CENTER FOR RECONCILIATION

2020 2021

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HEALING THE PAST TRANSFORMING THE FUTURE



MARY HOCH Center for Reconciliation



Authored by Merisa Mattix and Hannah Adamson Contributions and editing from the Mary Hoch Center for Reconciliation Team

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Cover Photo: Hassan Elmi and Suldaan Abdisalam, Somali Clan elders and reconcilers, chatting and laughing

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DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE PERSONAL HEALING IS KEY TO TRANSFORMING SOCIETIES

The withdrawal of international forces and abrupt collapse of the Afghan Government painfully illuminates how peace cannot be established nor sustained through force. It most often requires a process where conflicting parties come together and agree to build the nation together.

As peace agreements have been failing with increasing pace, the significance of reconciliation is becoming recognized. Reconciliation is a complex and often contested phenomena highlighting the necessity to study and better understand the process. The Mary Hoch Center for Reconciliation (MHCR) at the Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter School for Peace and Conflict Resolution has taken up this challenge with our partners, the United States Institute for Peace (USIP), Humanity United, #reconciliation, Helsinki Deaconess Institute, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Finland, among others.

Within our team, we are working to highlight and improve the impact of reconciliation in a myriad of ways through research. Associate Director **Nicholas Sherwood** and Lab Manager **Oakley Hill** have led our Transformation and Reconciliation Lab team to conduct dozens of interviews during the past year with leading practitioners in an effort to document key lessons learned and identify where support is needed. Similarly, our research fellows **Fanie de Toit** and **Angelina Mendez** have interviewed those leading or who have led reconciliation processes to capture their wisdom and best practices. Several research projects encapsulating these efforts are already in an analysis phase, and we will be convening with USIP and #reconciliation leading practitioners and scholars to develop recommendations from these findings. Thank you, **Gretchen and Charles Hauss**, for your continuous guidance and support with our research and implementation of our practice.

During the past year, MHCR introduced the NeuroPeace publication series and Think Peace Podcast developed by Research Professor **Colette Rausch**. These cutting-edge and accessible resources have found wide audiences. MHCR also introduced a webinar series at the request of Rep. **Barbara Lee** (D-CA) to help her team and those assisting both local and national truth, healing, and transformation initiatives to benefit from international experiences. Collaboration later expanded



Above: Ali Hamouda and Sheik Farej from Libya talk with Antti

Right: Rowda Olad and Fatma Jafari stand with Antti at USIP



through MHCR's role in helping **Dr. Gail Christopher** and others to form the US Truth, Racial Healing and Transformation Leadership Group. For the one-year-old center, the challenge was enormous, but the whole team rallied behind these efforts. Particularly **Hannah Adamson**, **Merisa Mattix**, and **Cameron Cassar** deserve recognition for their efforts behind the webinar series and publications, in addition to managing the MHCR Team with former Associate Director **Annalisa Jackson**. We felt it was our time to serve from our own part in this nation during its quest for racial justice and healing. Research Professor **Eduardo Gonzalez** and **Oakley Hill** conducted mapping with the New England School of Law, which revealed a growing hunger for truth and justice throughout the United States.

MHCR was established to present new evidence on how to make reconciliation more impactful. We have also been testing ways to support truth and reconciliation processes with our Insider Reconciler Fellows **Betty Bigombe**, **Rowda Olad**, and **Tecla Namachanja** – together with several Indigenous leaders, such as the President of the United Nations Permanent Forum for Indigenous Issues, **Anne Nuorgam**. There are limits to what an academic center can do so we will be expanding our partnerships to better provide operational support.

Working for reconciliation and healing can be lonely and, at times, dangerous. Trauma awareness and healing seem to trigger pushback from those who have not found enough safety or strength to deal with their own wounds. In continuing to honor the legacy of **Mary Hoch**, MHCR has aligned itself with using innate healing power within every human mind and wisdom in every tradition and community on how to overcome our differences. When we find the courage to seek healing from our past, we also have the power to transform our future. It has become evident to us that only those continuously seeking personal healing can also initiate social healing with others and societal transformation in a sustainable way. With this realization, we are not only working to foster personal and social healing on the path to reconciliation but sustain these efforts by maintaining the wellbeing of changemakers.

At this two-year mark, I would like to recognize and appreciate my Carter School colleagues, the MHCR Advisory Board members, and foremost **James Hoch** and the entire **Hoch family** for their trust and partnership. I would like to thank all our supporters and partners for these extraordinary first two years as we enter our new phase in becoming an even more student-led center bridging the gap between academic research on-the-ground round processes. As we embark on this next step in our journey we seek to best support those who now lead truth-telling and healing processes and foster the growth of our students to become highly knowledgeable and relevant for these ongoing processes.

With enormous gratitude,

Antti Pentkäinen

Director, the Mary Hoch Center for Reconciliation Research Professor, Carter School at George Mason University





Above: Mpho Tutu with Antti Left: Antti speaks at event with Mustafa Ali

DIRECTORS MESSAGE

MISSION STATEMENT

MHCR aims to bring leading reconciliation experts and scholars together to both research reconciliation practices and develop the impact of ongoing and future reconciliation processes. MHCR gives special focus to supporting and enabling grassroots communities within conflict zones, connecting them with national and international efforts. Specifically, MHCR studies and promotes insider reconciliation facilitated by locals who are able to adapt reconciliation techniques to the region's cultural context and utilize their status as trusted members of the local community to create an environment of mutual trust and understanding. Together, we aim to lead collaborations of research and practice that will enable transformative reconciliation around the world.



WHAT WE DO

- Accompany reconciliation practitioners to help design and implement truth and reconciliation processes.
- **Research** reconciliation processes and practice.
- **Train** insider reconcilers and field-based practitioners.
- **Facilitate** interdisciplinary collaboration that supports ongoing reconciliation processes and process design.
- **Engage** with grassroots communities in reconciliation.
- Mentor students to become the next leading scholars and practitioners in reconciliation.

Sami Insider Reconcilers in circle

KEY PROGRAMS

- Support of Truth and Reconciliation Commissions
- **Reconciliation Process Support for Insider-Reconcilers**
- Social Healing and Transformation Program
- Research by the Transformation and Reconciliation Lab



Man ponders BLM tags in D.C. Picture courtesy of Thor Morales



The Mary Hoch Center for Reconciliation works to honor the legacy of Mary Hoch who embodied peacebuilding and reconciliation throughout all aspects of her life. All of Mary's children—Julia, Ross, and Bill—speak to their mother's innate ability to reach out to others, even when it wasn't easy, offer support, and identify common ground. Julia even remembers the powerful conversations her mother would host at their home over a meal between people of varied faith traditions so they could connect, even over strong differences about the 'hard questions of faith'. With this powerful spirit, Mary's husband, James Hoch, founded MHCR in her honor to further her ambition for reconciliation on a wide, global scale.



Mary Hoch, our Center's namesake

You can learn more about Mary Hoch and the founding of MHCR at mhcr.gmu.edu

"I have been impressed how guickly MHCR has been able to engage with actors doing this work on the ground and to contribute both to their understanding and find ways to support them. I am also impressed how involved the students are and how competent they are. Although I am aware that MHCR has been pushing boundaries on what an academic center is supposed to do, I am personally thankful for the support they have given for the healing process in the United States. Mary would be so proud of this too"

> - James Hoch Vice-Chair, MHCR Advisory Board

MISSION AND MARY HOCH

AS A YOUNG CENTER, MHCR HAS A SURPRISING IMPACT IN THE UNITED STATES

Many remember exactly where they were when they saw the video of former officer Derek Chauvin holding his knee on the neck of George Floyd for nearly 9 minutes. He begged and pleaded for his life only for Derek Chauvin and three other officers to ignore his pleas and allow him to die right there on the pavement while the entire encounter was caught on video. George Floyd's death fully encompassed the relationship between the police and Black America, as the American justice system continues to keep Black America down even as they beg and plead for change.

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Floyd's death triggered something within the hearts and minds of many Americans and allowed us to unite around a common idea: something like this cannot and should not be happening in the "land of the free". While this spurred many emotions within the hearts of everyday Americans, Floyd's death also triggered many emotions within many policy makers, most notably Congresswoman Barbara Lee and Senator Corey Booker. These two led the creation H.Con. Res.19 and S.Con.Res 6 which would create a US Commission on Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation. The idea of a truth commission resonated with our team here at MHCR since we have numerous members who have helped to establish truth commissions or have been a part of truth commissions worldwide.





Pictures featured

are courtesy of Thor Morales

Above & Right: Monica Curca, former MHCR Research Affiiate and Director of +Peace, organized Peace Creation workshops in Washington, D.C.

This idea resonated with the team here at MHCR so deeply that we had multiple team members support the formation of the **US Truth Racial Healing and Transformation Movement** (USTRHT), a movement that "unites civic groups, faith leaders, academics, artists and celebrities in advocating for racial equity." The goal of this movement is to tell the truth about historical and present-day racial inequities, build respectful and accountable relationships across racial lines to honor our common humanity, and transform our policies, procedures, and practices into ones that eradicate systemic racism and build a more equitable future for us all.

The movement builds on the successes of local truth commissions around the country and uses their local knowledge, expertise, and experience to craft a nation-wide truth commission which can play a crucial role in advancing racial healing and reconciliation within the country. This coincides with the mission of MHCR which aims to bring scholars and practitioners of reconciliation together to both research reconciliation practices, as well as develop the impact of ongoing and future reconciliation processes, so it only made sense for MHCR to be come of the USTRHT Movement.

Along with many instances of police brutality like the cases of Breonna Taylor and Ahmaud Abery, the death of George Floyd served as a flash point for a movement for racial justice which hasn't been seen in America since Martin Luther King was leading

Left: Three women stand in front of Black Lives Matter posters



protests. Protests emerged all over the country and continued throughout the entire summer of 2020.

The protests brought together people of all races, ethnicities, socioeconomic statuses, sexual orientations, you name it. However, these protests are only the beginning; the work to truly heal the country begins now, and as we celebrate our two-year anniversary that has been our major question and mission: "How do we heal?"

MHCR has been on the cutting edge of research and practice on this topic since our institution was founded in October 2019. Our support of the USTRHT Movement is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to our role within the field of peacebuilding and reconciliation. Just within the US in the past year, our organization has played a crucial role in the formation of several processes and initiatives within this field. These have included: supporting local TRHT commissions, creating a way to connect truth commissions all over the country, launching the MHCR Webinar series which aimed at convening scholars, experts, and practitioners to engage in dialogue surrounding various aspects of reconciliation, as well as the launching of *NeuroPeace*, an online open source series that explores how neuroscience insights can inform current peacebuilding processes and foster reconciliation on all levels, and lastly the production of the Think Peace Podcast: Where Peace Crosses the **Mind** which explores the intersection of the human brain, psyche and obstacles and opportunities to forging a lasting peace.

MARY HOCH CENTER FOR RECONCILIATION I 2021

"...when you...give voices to the voiceless and really do the hard work to embrace the intractable you can start the process of healing"

All in all, the murder of George Floyd set in motion a new era not only in our country but in the entire field of peacebuilding and reconciliation. It gave us a chance to take a step back to first analyze just how deeply divided our country actually is and next how we can better our field to start the process towards resolving some of these conflicts which may seem intractable. Here at MHCR, we know that these problems do not just go away with the wave of a magic wand. However, like our team here at MHCR, when you give people necessary tools and knowledge, give voices to the voiceless and really do the hard work to embrace the intractable you can start the process of healing on a nationwide scale.

Story By: Cameron Cassar Communications Officer



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CONFLICT IN OUR BACKYARD

10 CONFLICT IN **OUR OWN** BACKYARD



Eduardo Gonzalez, MHCR Research Affiliate. leads our support of Truth and **Reconciliation Commissions** (TRC). He is one of the foremost global experts on transitional justice and mechanisms to treat past human rights violations, including truth commissions. Gonzalez served in the Truth

and Reconciliation Commission of his native country. Peru, and has advised commissions in approximately twenty countries around the world, including local commissions in the U.S. Gonzalez's wealth of knowledge and contacts in the global community of truth-seeking experts is a critical asset MHCR brings to the wider peacebuilding field.

Mr. Gonzalez also recently co-published an article in **Foreign Policy** reflecting on lessons learned from other countries' transitional justice processes in context of the efforts for racial justice within the U.S. MHCR is committed to supporting dozens of local initiatives working to bring truth to light, fostering healing within communities, and enabling transformation towards a just society. Over the past year, this work has included supporting the US Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation movement, responding to a request from **Representative Barbara Lee** (D-CA) to support resolutions H.Con.Res.19 and S.Con.Res.6, and connecting with local changemakers. However, we are cognizant that legislative progress can be slow or halting. Therefore, MHCR is currently working to develop individualized accompaniment support for local actors initiating truth and reconciliation processes and to build strategic partnerships and communities of practice.

MAPPING LOCAL INITIATIVES

Map of Current Truth & Reconciliation Initiatives in the US



Eduardo Gonzalez and Oakley Hill have been engaged with a mapping process of truth and reconciliation initiatives across the country, in collaboration with the Center for International Law and Policy at the New England School of Law. They have documented about 20 local initiatives already established and a similar number of those in preparation. This mapping project will help identify the needs of local communities and gain a better understanding of how we can engage with them to support a national movement for healing.

SUPPORT FOR **TRUTH AND** RECONCILIATION **COMMISSIONS**



Since the Fall of 2020, MHCR has reached out to twelve different local truth-seeking initiatives in California, Oregon, Iowa, Maine, Minnesota, North Carolina, Texas and Virginia, as well as groups proposing thematic truth commissions regarding policing and immigration. MHCR has reached out to experts and practitioners across the country, including those in the US TRHT Movement, the Divided Communities Project based at the Ohio State University, the Transitional Justice in the U.S. Network hosted by the New England School of Law, and the International Center for Transitional Justice. In connecting with these individuals, organizations, and networks, MHCR is focused on building the trust necessary for creating a positive impact.

In our experience, truth seeking institutions are delicate processes, requiring an alignment of several complicated factors, including an appropriate mandate for each conflict context, a properly balanced composition of truth commission members, and appropriate political context and social support. Local advocates seeking to launch a truth and reconciliation process should look to national and international precedents to guide these processes and engage the extensive community of experts and practitioners available to provide support. Utilizing these resources can ensure the best choices are made at different stages of design and implementation.

Support to each initiative must be tailored to reflect the needs and willingness from the local actors, respecting their leadership and decisions. MHCR has completed significant planning to assist multiple commissions and processes, proposing peer learning and co-creation models that are highly appreciated by the initiatives.

TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE **INTENSIVE COURSE**

Mr. Gonzalez and partners are designing a ten-week course for local change makers, government leaders, and community members involved in truth and reconciliation processes. This course would provide needed training on how to successfully formulate and implement truth and reconciliation commissions in a variety of contexts and has the potential of connecting individuals involved in these processes to build a peer support network and establish alliances with experts in transitional justice.



TRC Planning Template

Beveloping community-

based resources and

privities.



Commissions

PORTLAND WEBINAR SERIES

Over the course of June 2021, MHCR partnered with the Portland Committee on Community-Engaged Policing (PCCEP), Portland State National Policy Consensus Center, and Oregon Humanities to host a webinar series for communities in Portland to share comparative wisdom on other truth and reconciliation commissions (TRCs) and envision the possibilities for a TRC in Portland.

CONFLICT IN OUR BACKYARD

12 **PUBLICATIONS ON TRCs**

Mr. Gonzalez has written two innovative essays MHCR will publish in 2021. The first is a comprehensive essay on how Indigenous peoples around the world have started to use the truth commission model to advance their claims and seek a new relationship with the countries they live in. The essay tracks a dozen truth commissions around the world showing how, progressively, Indigenous peoples have utilized their own wisdom and knowledge to transform the TRC paradigm, and how the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples can have a critical impact in the improvement of truth commissions. This paper, prepared in cooperation with Finland's Helsinki Deaconess Institute, was presented in April 2021 during the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

The second paper concerns the emergence of civil society truth commissions, that is,

truth-seeking processes launched when states

MHCR IN THE NEWS: TRC SUPPORT



CBS on "Iowa News Now" reports about MHCR Research Affiliate Eduardo Gonzalez's involvement in the design of their TRC in February of 2021.

fail to investigate egregious human rights violations. These truth commissions, while unofficial, can have an important role as precursors to official initiatives and their role cannot be understated. This paper, prepared in cooperation with the International Center for Transitional Justice, will be presented in the last guarter of 2021.

SHARING OUR KNOWLEDGE

Expanding on MHCR's hosting of "Learning from Experience: Truth & Reconciliation Processes in the US" in December of 2020 to meet the growing need for truth across the country, MHCR hosted a side event to the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) to offer a similar comparative learning space on global experiences on Indigenous truth and reconciliation commissions.

opening remarks and panelists represented groups from Finland,

to the United Nations, connected Indigenous leaders and activists,

Australia, Norway, Canada, and Alaska in the US. This event, in



Panel II at the UNPFII side-event webinar in April 2021

political leaders, and advocates to discuss their lessons learned and inform future processes. It was powerful to witness panelists resonating with one another's experiences and sharing wisdom with attendees on their own journeys toward truth and healing. Following this, Mr. Gonzalez was asked to provide remarks on the importance of truth to leaders within the United Nations during a high-level meeting in July 2021. MHCR is committed to continuing the connection of local leaders and sharing of key lessons learned to better support truth and reconciliation processes domestically and internationally.



Antti stands with Libyan tribal elders

A cornerstone of MHCR's mission is to provide tailored accompaniment support to ongoing initiatives and insider-reconcilers. To date, MHCR has supported three Insider-Reconciler Fellows. provided emergency assistance to peacebuilders throughout COVID-19, and worked in collaboration with many organizations in the Horn of Africa through a grant from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland. To better provide this assistance, MHCR is committed to furthering the field of reconciliation and has hosted meetings of reconciliation experts at the United States Institute of Peace in an effort to better develop actionable definitions and theories of change. MHCR is currently working on developing a theory of change for reconciliation, continuing support for Insider-Reconciler Fellows, and initiating a State Department funded comparative project connecting First Alaskans and the Sámi people of Finland.



Archbishop Kari Makinen with Hassan Elmi and Suldaan Abdisalam

MOVING BEYOND THE US: INTERNATIONAL RECONCILIATION



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Anonymous mother in the Democratic **Republic of Congo**

MHCR is committed to support reconciliation processes around the globe focusing on process design in long-term collaboration with individuals called as insider reconcilers who are seeking to create transformative change

(e.g., reconciliation, healing, and transformation) in their own communities and societies. Currently, MHCR's work includes a collaboration with leading reconciliation experts and organization such as the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), #reconciliation, individuals invited to become Insider Reconciliation Fellows (P. 16-17), convening international reconciliation experts, and research assessing the need(s) and role(s) of insider reconcilers within reconciliation processes.

INTERNATIONAL RECONCILIATION

MHCR is currently engaged in strengthening reconciliation processes within the Horn of Africa (Ethiopia, Somalia, and South Sudan). This program, funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland, features a consortium of international partners: MHCR, the Al Amana Centre, Felm, Inclusive Peace, the Helsinki Deaconess Institute, and other local actors operating within the Horn of Africa. Together, our organizations are pooling our resources and abilities to bolster reconciliation processes within the Horn of Africa, offer psychosocial support within conflict zones, and bridge the gap between local reconciliation actors and political leaders. To accomplish these goals, MHCR is currently collaborating with Inclusive Peace to conceptualize a virtual Reconciliation Portal (guided by Simon Key's recent 'map' of reconciliation processes), providing accompaniment and support to three Insider Reconcilers currently operating within the Horn of Africa, and reconceptualizing the existing reconciliation theories of change in a context of international conflict. Other efforts at MHCR are amplifying this work, including our recent and future father of friends to advise on issues related to reconciliation.

UNITED STATES INSTITUTE OF PEACE COLLABORATION WITH EXPERTS ON RECONCILIATION

In collaboration with InclusivePeace and the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), MHCR hosted a virtual discussion on Improving the Impact of Reconciliation on Thursday, January 28, 2021. This discussion brought together leading experts, scholars, and practitioners from various sectors and a range of regional contexts to discuss initial MHCR research findings, reconciliation concept development, and a number of case studies. MHCR affiliates Angelina Mendes and Fanie du Toit presented key research findings on improving the impact of reconciliation and Simon Keys shared a new mapping model of reconciliation. This event sought to stimulate innovative and fresh perspectives on the framework of reconciliation, to inform future research and practice in the field, and to support future collaboration on improving the effectiveness of reconciliation processes as a fundamental component of reaching sustainable peace.

IMPROVING THE IMPACT OF RECONCILIATION RESEARCH

MHCR will develop a report, primarily aimed at reconciliation and peacebuilding practitioners, academics, policymakers, and other professionals, in response to the growing need in the field to stimulate innovative and fresh perspectives on the framework of reconciliation, to inform future research and practice, and to improve the

effectiveness of reconciliation processes as a fundamental component for dealing with the past to transform broken relationships and work towards achieving some form of sustainable peace. This research will seek to inform reconciliation process support and make the case for an improved theory of change approach that underscores why reconciliation is important for conflict resolution, peacebuilding, and preventing the recurrence of violence. This research will draw from a range of geographical cases to generate new insights and convey existing knowledge and lessons learned to illustrate the complexity and nuances of reconciliation work through the use of concrete examples. This gualitative study is based on interviews with reconciliation experts from various countries across the globe. The final report based on this study will serve to advance reconciliation thinking and practice, and more importantly, to improve the impact of reconciliation in the path towards conflict transformation. The final report is expected to be completed in Fall 2021.

PEACEBUILDING LEADERSHIP SKILLS DEVELOPMENT **INITIATIVE FOR MYANMAR YOUTH**

MHCR is collaborating with a leading non-governmental organization in Myanmar to support a peacebuilding and leadership skills development initiative to empower youth in the Rakhine state. This unique non-accredited certificate education program will be co-led and monitored by MHCR affiliate Angelina Mendes. The initiative will include collaborative training by guest lecturers from within and beyond Myanmar. This education program will be based on a participatory approach fostering leadership, inclusion, diversity, and civic action towards a democratic and inclusive Myanmar. Youth participants to this program will be representative of different ethnic, religious, class, gender, regional, and cultural backgrounds who have been instrumental during Myanmar's transition period in promoting efforts towards building a more cohesive and democratic society. MHCR, as part of the Carter School and George Mason University, will serve as the official certifying body for this initiative. The goal of this program is to empower youth in Myanmar so that upon successful completion they will have requisite training and qualification to better prepare them for future job security both in Myanmar and further afield. This initiative will also empower youth to contribute towards building a future of promoting democracy, justice, freedom, and equality for all in Myanmar.



Paivi Magga calf marking during summer 2019

MHCR was recently awarded a grant from the United States Department of State, specifically the US Embassy in Finland, to implement a project connecting the First Alaskans with the Saami/Sámi Indigenous people in Finland. The First Alaskans Institute, led by La quen náay Liz Medicine Crow, has been conducting important reconciliation work centering Indigenous traditions, while compelling state, church, and other constituencies to engage in the process to become accountability partners, ensuring necessary transformational changes. As Finland launches a Truth and Reconciliation Commission with the Saami Indigenous people, this Alaskan model is a highly relevant learning opportunity. By connecting these two processes, there are opportunities for peer-learning, support, and transformation, especially ensuring that the Finnish process becomes centered around Indigenous voices and actors. MHCR's Antti Pentikäinen will facilitate this initiative and filmmaker Bob Cohen will produce a documentary of the exchange that will be screened with the U.S. Embassy in Finland in Spring 2022.

LEARNING FROM KENYAN PROCESSES

On September 3rd, 2021, MHCR held their first in-person event since 2019: "Healing Social Divides in Kenya". Three delegates from the National Social Cohesion & Integration Commission (NCIC) of Kenya: Vice-Chair Wambui Nyutu and Commissioners Sam Kona and Dr. Danvas Makori participated in a panel moderated by MHCR Communications Officer, Cam Cassar. Although context and cultures may differ across contexts, these Commissioners highlighted common themes and practices that can unite reconciliation efforts from Kenya, to the US, and beyond.

HEALING THROUGH ANCESTRAL WISDOM: ALASKA FIRST NATIONS SHARING INSIGHTS AND PRACTICES WITH SAAMI AND THE STATE OF FINLAND

Commissioners sit at the Carter School for the panel discussion



INTERNATIONAL RECONCILIATION

SPOTLIGHT: INSIDER RECONCILER FELLOWS

One of MHCR's key goals is to support and enable grassroots communities within conflict zones and connect these communities with national and international efforts. Supporting locally-led efforts is essential to the success and longevity of peace processes. MHCR promotes insider reconciliation, facilitated by locals who are able to adapt reconciliation techniques to the region's cultural context and utilize their status as trusted members of the local community to create an environment of mutual trust and understanding. To best support these insider reconcilers, MHCR hosts an Insider Reconciler Fellows program, connecting local changemakers with resources and insight from reconciliation scholars and practitioners alike. Thus far, the MHCR Insider Reconciler Fellows program has supported three individuals, featured here. Moving forward, MHCR hopes to expand this fellowship program on a case-by-case basis and offer the unique opportunity for collaborating with MHCR as an academic center.



TECLA NAMANCHANJA WAJALA

Dr. Tecla Namachanja Wanjala is a globally recognized peace practitioner with over 30 years of experience. Formerly she was Vice and Acting Chairperson of Kenya's Truth Justice and Reconciliation Commission (TJRC) and was subsequently included in the 1,000 Women jointly Nominated for the 2005 Nobel Peace Prize. Currently she serves as the founder and team lead of the Shalom Centre for Counselling and Development (SCCoDev), which is committed to creating, holding and transforming trusted spaces for healing and reconciliation.

With support from MHCR, she is working in the Mt. Elgon region in Bungoma County in the Western Region of Kenya to foster healing following some of the worst ethnic land clashes in 1991, 1992, 2006-2008, and 2018. Since July 2021, Dr. Wanjala, with SCCoDev, has hosted six Community Healing Circles, each lasting five days and reaching a total of 120 people, many being women, ex-militants, ex-convicts, and the elderly. Dr. Wanjala explains, "These spaces have led to a great impact in healing, restoring hope, repairing relationships and transforming the conflicts among the affected people in

this community" and attests to this through the stories of circle participants. She explains the challenge of attracting funding when the true power of this work is witnessed during the the confidential Community Healing Circles, and is thus grateful for the MHCR Insider Reconciler Fellowship as it has allowed her to, "support some healing circle meetings in Kipsigon, earn a stipend, and purchase some equipment such as an external drive, a laptop and a power bank for this noble job".



Photo courtesy of Dr. Wanjala featuring one of the Community Healing Circles

Betty Bigombe is a peacebuilder native to Uganda. She is internationally known for her instrumental role in negotiation efforts between the Lords Resistance Army (LRA) and the Ugandan government. Despite serious risks to her own safety, Bigombe initiated contact with LRA leader Joseph Kony and continued peacebuilding efforts even when others pulled out of the process. Some of her former roles include Senior Director for Fragility, Conflict, and Violence at the World Bank, member of the Ugandan Parliament, and other positions within the Ugandan government. Now MHCR is supporting her work in South Sudan to bridge political divides and foster healing within the country. Despite the pandemic, Bigombe still travelled back and forth to Juba from her home to continue vital peace talks that otherwise could have been abandoned. As she continues to support this peace process she is also engaged in facilitating mediation training in the Netherlands and a variety of other initiatives.



Bigombe explains that the fellowship with MHCR has specifically helped her through the sharing of knowledge and comparative experiences and through its research working to better tailor conflict approaches to their unique contexts. Moving forward, to better expand her work, Bigombe is currently seeking a civil society assistant to support the work, a larger budget to engage with the mothers of fighters who can appeal to their sons for peace, and more funding to support her mediation training and capacity building workshops.

Photo courtesy of Ms. Bigombe *featuring her meeting with President* Kiir for the peace process. Juba, South Sudan, September 2020



the context of state building, political stability, and social healing. Olad has worked with MHCR to lead discussions on mental health in post-conflict zones and share more about her work. MHCR is supporting Olad in the launch of a program that will further contextualize mental health in reconciliation practice in fragile states. Currently, she is also working with Dr. Cherie Bridges Patrick to create a guidebook for a community of practice between mental health practitioners and peacebuilders, engaging in the nexus between them. This work is at "the intersection of mental health and trauma in fragile states" Dr. Partick explains.

Olad is encouraged by her partnership with MHCR as she explains how she sees MHCR's support as "opening doors for both worlds to see each other" as "practitioners are applying practical lessons on the ground, building bridges between research and practice".

BETTY BIGOMBE



ROWDA ABDULLAHI OLAD

Rowda Olad is a recently Vogue-featured psychotherapist and founder of Maandeeg Mental Health Without Borders. Rowda leads psych-educational training for government institutions and regional leaders in Somalia and has designed and implemented Psychological Rehabilitation Programs for high risk inmates and defectors. She has also been working with key actors throughout Somalia in elevating the mental health and psychological rehabilitation within



Photo courtesy of Ms. Olad featuring her mental health work with women in Somalia

INTERNATIONAL RECONCILIATION

SUSTAINING PEACEBUILDING SOCIAL HEALING AND TRANSFORMATION



aims to convene leaders of social transformation to (1) co-create a learning community (2) conduct research and develop training and educational materials for social transformation practitioners at the nexus of neuroscience, psychosocial support, wellbeing, and peacebuilding; and (3) provide support for domestic and international transformation efforts.



In connecting with peacebuilders both domestically and abroad, and serving as practitioners, MHCR is keenly aware of the complexity and depth of the psychosocial impacts of this work. Maintaining the wellbeing of peacebuilders, while crucial to the longevity and success of reconciliation efforts, is largely understudied and under supported. In response to this, the MHCR Social Healing and Transformation program works to build support networks and resources for those engaged in changemaking. Initiatives include a Community of Practice, the Think Peace Podcast, and the publication of NeuroPeace.

The recent emergence of brain, mind, and body sciences (e.g., neuroscience, cross-cultural wellbeing, trauma, and transformation) allow for the possibility for innovative research and practice programs to refine the connection between individual and systemic transformation. The Social Healing and Transformation program contends that if leaders of social transformation processes and initiatives integrate knowledge and practice from the nexus of neuroscience and peacebuilding, mental health, psychosocial support, trauma healing and transformation, and wellbeing into their work and lives, then they are better equipped to build peace within themselves, our institutions, our societies, and our world.

THINK PEACE PODCAST

WHERE PEACE CROSSES THE MIND



The Think Peace Podcast, created and hosted by MHCR Research Professor Colette Rausch and Senior Producer Cam Cassar—a Carter School Master's student—explores insights into the link between neuroscience and peacebuilding, as well as approaches to transform societal divisions and cycles of violence. Every episode examines the intersection of the human brain, psyche and the obstacles and opportunities for forging lasting peace. Guests include leaders and actors within these fields to create awareness of vital initiatives and connect people across divides. The podcast's first season started in January and as of the end of September, it has aired 21 episodes.

PUBLISHING NEUROPEACE

NeuroPeace, created and edited by MHCR Research Professor, Colette Rausch, is an online, open-source series focusing on research and practice at the nexus of neuroscience and peacebuilding. It includes articles and essays by scholars and practitioners exploring how neuroscientific insights can inform peacebuilding processes, including supporting dialogue, fostering reconciliation, and preventing violence, as well as addressing the fundamental causes of destructive conflict, injustice, and societal divisions. NeuroPeace was published as an online open source publication in a three-part series that covers a broad range of topics that are grouped under three broad headings and published in three separate volumes. The first volume, Individual Aggression, was published in March. The second volume, Group Dynamics, was published in April, and the third volume, Trauma, was published in May.

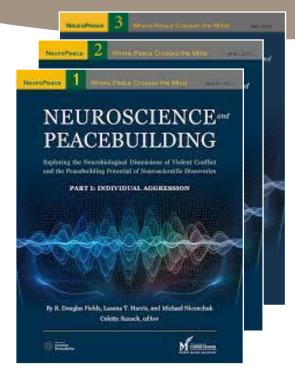
COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

The Community of Practice operates as a co-learning and co-creating community of leading practitioners, scholars, and students aimed at advancing a culture shift wherein leaders of social transformation center individual and collective transformation in efforts to build more inclusive and just societies. The Community of Practice convened by MHCR convenes quarterly gatherings and learning exchanges. The community of practice serves as a convening space for practitioners and scholars interested in learning, mutual support, and co-creating resources at the nexus of neuroscience, wellbeing, resilience, and peacebuilding. The community of practice will also be available to provide advisory support to various initiatives and act as an incubator of new initiatives. On April 21, MHCR launched the Community of Practice As a follow up to the Pilot Peer Support through its first pilot session. The initial gathering Program, MHCR co-sponsored the focused on introductions and facilitated a discussion on Unconventional Circles Program and will the problems each participant is seeking to solve and the continue supporting and promoting the challenges faced in doing so. The second pilot session learning and advancement of co-designed was held on June 30, and focused on the topic of finding and community based models of peace among peacebuilders and other agents of social peer-support. Key findings will be utilized change. The two gatherings were invitation only to advance efforts for providing models of gatherings of leading experts and practitioners working psychosocial support including peer at the thematic intersections of the Social Healing and support within peace and reconciliation Transformation program. processes. Learn more about Unconventional International at unconventionalwomen.org.

OTHER INITIATIVES

A mapping was conducted by Carter School PhD student, Toni Farris, on practitioners and scholars working towards social transformation at the nexus of neuroscience, trauma transformation, mental health. somatics and peacebuilding. The mapping is providing ongoing support for identifying potential members of the Community of Practice, as well as partners.







SUSTAINING PEACEBUILDING

INNOVATING THE FIELD: TRANSFORMATION AND **RECONCILIATION LAB**

In January 2020, guided by the vision of Carter School PhD student Nick Sherwood, MHCR formed the Transformation and Reconciliation Lab (TRL): a student-led research lab that (a) documents and disseminates key findings in reconciliation practice and (b) provides accompaniment research to leading reconciliation actors. Currently, TRL is led by Carter School graduate students Oakley Hill and Jena Kitchen and is assisted by

Key Accomplishments



undergraduate research assistants. TRL is producing new knowledge surrounding specific reconciliation methodologies, expert- and program-driven reconciliation processes, and the role of insider reconcilers in transforming conflict. TRL has facilitated a collaborative, supportive, and inclusive research culture where all involved are listed as authors/presenters. They are a diverse group in terms of gender, sexual orientation, religion, and experience.

PROJECTS

The Role of Insider Reconcilers within International Reconciliation Processes

Insider reconcilers (InRec) are here defined as (a) individuals currently facilitating reconciliation processes in active conflict and are also (b) deeply connected to or involved in one or more parties to the conflict. According to anecdotal data from the field, these individuals can be key players in peacebuilding processes and are often seen as trustworthy, efficient, and transformative reconciliation facilitators. To date, however, there have been no empirical investigations surrounding InRec's (a) theory of change within conflict dynamics, (b) strategies used during reconciliation processes, nor (c) the impact of this work on InRec's mental health and wellness. To answer these questions, the research team is conducting an exploratory study utilizing person-centered ethnographic interviews to directly ask insider reconcilers of their experiences in these domains. Preliminary results indicate InRec are often underpaid and under-supported in their work, experience high levels of stress and other challenges to wellbeing as a result of their peacebuilding work, and international peacebuilding organizations can both empower and hinder InRec interventions.

MARY HOCH CENTER FOR RECONCILIATION 1 2021

The Impact of COVID-19 on Religious Leaders and their Communities

In the summer of 2020, when peace work around the world was disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Al Amana Centre in Muscat, Oman proposed a cooperative research project studying the impact of COVID-19 on religious leaders, their response to the pandemic, as well as a needs assessment of these leaders, their congregations, and their communities. In response, our research team conducted semi-structured interviews with an international sample of religious leaders from diverse countries (e.g., Pakistan, Finland, the UK, Bangladesh), religious traditions (e.g., Christian, Muslim, Jewish), and positions of leadership (e.g., community organizers, ministers, youth group leaders). Preliminary results suggest many religious leaders have transformed the challenges of COVID to (a) deepen their faith and religious practice, (b) better serve their congregations and constituents, and (c) experience respite during this time. These results suggest religious leaders and their congregations, while experiencing challenge and hardship during COVID, are creating innovative ways to take care of themselves, their families, and their communities throughout the global pandemic. This study is currently at the tail end of data collection and will soon move to data analysis, write-up, and distribution phases.

Approximating Expert Knowledge of Reconciliation Models and Methods

Scholars and practitioners conceptualize, model, implement, and assess reconciliatory conflict resolution processes in widely diverse ways, including: thick to thin approaches, grassroots to state-based strategies, structured to improvised tactics, and philosophical foundations from both the Global North and Global South. At present, few studies have either (a) critically assessed the strengths and weaknesses of these diverse reconciliation models and their efficacy in the field or (b) attempted to synthesize these models in a cohesive and useful manner. To address this gap in the literature, this exploratory study utilizes the Delphi method to compare and synthesize expert scholars' and practitioners' (N = 10) models of reconciliation processes. The first round of data collection is characterized by participants' essay responses to prompts concerning the strengths and weaknesses of five reconciliation models. The second round of data collection is characterized by participants ranking these models (e.g., coherence, agreement, importance, and relevance). The research team then synthesizes these diverse models through a thematic analysis of participants' testimonies. Combining participants' testimonies with the research team's analysis, a synthetic and integrative model of reconciliation is proposed, characterized by multiple levels, multiple dimensions, and transdisciplinarity. This model is built to guide future reconciliation research and practice. This study has recently completed its second round of data collection and will now move to data analysis, write-up, and distribution phases.

Evidence review for the United States Institute of Peace (USIP)

The TRL is supporting an evidence review of reconciliation which aims to develop an improved theory of change for reconciliation for USIP. Currently, the TRL is producing a USIP report (to be completed October 18, 2021) concerning reconciliatory theories of change. This report (a) analyzes 20 theories of change from reconciliatory interventions, considers empirical evidence for their viability, (b) analyzes the methodologies of program evaluations, and (c) includes a brief literature review on reconciliation and theories of change. Building upon this, MHCR's focus will be on conducting deeper embedded research, including case studies to develop recommendations for international experts which then can be produced into policy papers, preferably a UN Guidance Note on reconciliation. This will also support the establishment of a community of practice to assist in reconciliation process design and implementation.

SHARING **KNOWLEDGE** & BUILDING OUR FUTURE

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WEBINARS

On December 10, MHCR hosted "Learning from Experience: Truth & Reconciliation Processes in the US" to connect changemakers working towards truth, healing, and racial justice in the United States with the wisdom of individuals who already conducted processes. The response to this event indicated the possibilities for webinars to provide a vital space for connection, education, and training on reconciliation initiatives. To meet this need and build upon this foundation, in January 2021 MHCR launched a spring Webinar Series covering a variety of topics that benefited practitioners currently engaged in changemaking initiatives, as well as students, community members, and experts. Through this series and some complementary informal conversations, we were able to build connections between speakers and among attendees, while providing needed information, training, and knowledge sharing. This series has furthered MHCR's visibility within the field resulting in greater opportunities for collaboration.

STUDENT LEADERSHIP

Situated within the Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter School for Peace and Conflict Resolution, MHCR prioritizes student engagement and leadership throughout the Carter School's projects. Shortly after the inception of MHCR in fall 2019, our team expanded to include both graduate and undergraduate students, creating opportunities for students to engage in both research and practice. For instance, MHCR Research Fellow, Angelina Mendes has taken a lead role in convening reconciliation experts to analyze best practices in reconciliation process design and provide guidance on revising a theory of change for reconciliation.

Furthermore, through the Transformation and Reconciliation Lab (TRL)—a student-led lab directed by Nicholas Sherwood and Oakley Hill-undergraduate students are mentored by graduate students in the research process and gain hands-on experience in advancing MHCR's research studies. Rather than a transactional style of management where students are hired merely to perform predetermined tasks, the lab considers the career interests and goals of each member. At the beginning of employment each student is asked to report their career interests and goals. The lab manager then distributes lab tasks and training as closely to the career interests of the lab member as possible. This mentorship is essential for preparing students for both research processes and future opportunities within the field. Students have been trained and mentored in research design, use of online databases, use of research software, interviewing participants, transcription, presenting in academic settings, research ethics, academic writing, and curriculum vitae writing.

Outside the lab, students are involved in all of MHCR's programs and operations through event planning, project reporting, grant writing, communications, and outreach. By engaging in MHCR's various programs, students have the opportunity to develop both technical and leadership skills, under the mentorship of MHCR staff, affiliates, and fellows.



MHCR team reflects at Retreat at Point of View in September 2021

REFLECTIONS & DREAMS

"I feel deeply honored to have the opportunity to receive 'clinical' (practical) training in reconciliation while working on my PhD, to have the opportunity to weave insights from my coursework / dissertation project together with the wisdom of reconciliation experts from around the globe"

- Cam Cassar, **Communications Officer**

The tools and knowledge that we

provide are useful for anyone no

matter your field or interests and

there are not many fields that can

say they translate as easily to any

discipline as much as peacebuilding"

"I am grateful to be part of this approach and learn how to best support peacebuilding in ways that champion local wisdom. In doing this work and fostering this approach I hope MHCR can be part of a larger shift within the peacebuilding field"

> - Hannah Adamson, **Programs Officer**

Middle: Two men grasp hands Left and Right: MHCR team reflects at Point of View

"My dream for MHCR is for it to develop and expand into a place where students with a passion for this mission have a meaningful opportunity to work at the crucial crossroads of practice and academia, gaining real-world experiences making substantial contributions to the field of reconciliation and peacebuilding"

- Nicholas Sherwood, Associate Director

"As I began at MHCR, I was immediately welcomed, mentored, and empowered. It is a privilege to be a part of the expanding work at the largely unexplored nexus of research and practice "

> - Merisa Mattix, Administrative Coordinator

holistic wellness of both the individual and the communities involved in conflict. I appreciate that MHCR doesn't shy away from challenging or complex topics"

"I value MHCR's approach to

- Jena Kitchen. **Research Officer**

- Colette Rausch. **Research Professor**

REFLECTIONS ON OUR PAST WORK

MHCR RESEARCH HELPS **REDEFINE RECONCILIATION**

'Traditional' peacebuilding models hinge on the role of third-party (i.e., individuals and organizations who are not native or endogenous to a given conflict context) intervenors upon conflict contexts. As the peace and conflict resolution field first developed, leaders in our field believed third-party intervenors may be neutral and impartial within conflict contexts giving these actors an ability to remain more objective and clear-headed during peacebuilding processes. Many thought utilizing third-party intervenors would be more effective than utilizing actors from within a given conflict context. That is, until folks like John Paul Lederach began seriously studying the role of insider (i.e., individuals and organizations who are native or endogenous to a given conflict context) peacebuilders on conflict interventions. Over time, Lederach and others began understanding why, how, and in which contexts insiders are better poised to enact transformational change within conflict.

The Mary Hoch Center for Reconciliation is committed to acknowledging, supporting, and elevating the words and deeds of insider peacebuilders, specifically insider reconcilers folks who hail from a given conflict context and are actively facilitating reconciliation processes within this conflict. MHCR Director Antti Pentikäinen says of our focus: "the idea is to shift focus away from third party mediators to the local actors themselves. We need to better understand and support the incremental process between parties in conflict and how they can learn to live together without returning to the cycles of violence and revenge." To date, MHCR has

Story By: Nicholas Sherwood Associate Director



identified and supported the efforts of three insider reconcilers in our network by naming them "Insider Reconcilers Fellows" and offerings financial support to their work: Rowda Olad (psychotherapist and peacebuilder from Somalia), Betty Bigombe (peacebuilder from Uganda), and Tecla Namachanja Wanjala, Ph.D. (peacebuilder from Kenya).

In addition to supporting MHCR's Insider Reconciler Fellows. our Transformation and Reconciliation Laboratory (TRL) is currently piloting a research study to understand how insider reconcilers think about reconciliation, their involvement in reconciliation processes, and how these processes might impact the psychological wellbeing of these actors. The goal of our study is to put the notion of 'insider reconcilers' on the map. Based both on preliminary data from our study, the testimonies of MHCR's Insider Reconciler Fellows, and the personal experiences of MHCR team members, insiders face unique challenges in the field - we are boundary crossers, attempting to build and maintain relationships across enemy lines. We experience constant and manifold stressors over the duration of our work. rarely enjoying the level of resources and support many reconciliation processes may require. This is not where the story ends, however. Based on my own experiences working on conflict in my 'homeland' (the American South), I find a beauty in facilitating reconciliation on my own doorstep - and other insider reconcilers have shared the same sentiment with me during our interviews. From my perspective, insider reconcilers are the future of the reconciliation field: able to weave bonds of connection within their communities, able to inspire commonality after violence has occurred, able to envision their homeland as one defined by peace and justice.

I look forward to sharing with each of you the wisdom of insider reconcilers - through our MHCR's research and practice. Onward!



Natalia met Vice President Kamala Harris on National Voter Registration Day, September 28, 2021

WHY DO YOU **SUPPORT** MHCR?

"U.S. Institute of Peace views MHCR's research on reconciliation potentially ground breaking and we are exited to be convening together leading actors on reconciliation to develop recommendations how to heal divides and transform societies. We are particularly exited about the student involvement and how they work with experts on the ground" Carl Stauffer, Senior Expert on Reconciliation, U.S. Institute of Peace."



Dr. Carl Stauffer. Senior Expert, USIP



UNITED STATES INSTITUTE OF PEACE Making Peace Possible

MHCR ALUMNI **CONTINUE TO EXCEL**

"Not only did I learn vital skills that I apply everyday in the classroom and in my daily life, but I also joined an amazing and supportive community that I know I can come back to whenever I need. I am thankful to MHCR for helping me to advance in my future endeavors"

- Natalia Kanos, GMU Student Body President, Former MHCR Research Assistant

Every gift has a positive impact on reconciliation efforts around the world. We appreciate all of our supporters.

"We decided to support MHCR the day Chip met Antti, which was also the day that he arrived at George Mason. We had both been looking for a peacebuilding NGO that specialized in reconciliation that included the United States in into practice. Lo and behold, one literally was dropped in our lap that day. We consider it an honor and a privilege to be able to both work with MHCR on its American projects and provide some seed funding to get them off the ground".

- Dr. Charles and **Gretchen Hauss**



THANK YOU DONORS & PARTNERS

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MARY HOCH CENTER FOR RECONCILIATION | 2021

Thank you so much for your continued support of the Mary Hoch Center for Reconciliation. Your support has fostered these meaningful projects and has impacted communities around the world. We appreciate your commitment to reconciliation practices both domestically and abroad.

Individuals

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#reconciliation 🚺





We also invite you to contact Maria Seniw, Director of Development for the Carter School, at mseniw@gmu.edu, to explore all our giving opportunities and to plan a gift in ways that achieve our shared goals.

You can direct your donation towards one of our key areas using the "additional comments" section on the form, or your donation can be used for the most urgent projects.

ANNUAL FINANCIAL DATA

FY 2021 July 1 2020 to June 30 2021		FY 2022 July 1 2021 to June 30 2022	
Beginning Balance	\$208,227.84	Beginning Balance	\$163,431.17
Income		Income	
Gifts and Grants	\$317,792.27	Received and Pledged Gifts and Grants	\$170,500.00
Expenses		Expenses	
Faculty, Students, and GRA's	\$ (274,597.53)	Faculty, Students, and GRA's Budgetted	\$ (286,418.34)
Consultants and research	\$ (79,500.00)	Students and research Budgetted	\$ (6,350.00)
Other program costs	\$ (2,423.47)	Other program costs Budgetted	\$ (6,000.00)
GMUF Overheads	\$ (6,067.94)	GMUF Overheads Budgetted	\$ (4,000.00)
Total Ending Balance FY 2021	\$ 163,431.17	Total Ending Balance FY 2022	\$ 31,162.83

We have included our full financial reports from the last year stretching into July of 2022. Please see these numbers to find how your support would be used to further the initiatives of our center.



HOW CAN YOU SUPPORT MHCR?



You can contact MHCR Director Antti Pentikainen (apentika@gmu.edu) or Nicholas Sherwood (nsherwo@gmu.edu) to discuss the impacts of vour donation in more detail.

THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS

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MARY HOCH Center for Reconciliation

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