

Columban Connections

The Columban Centre for Peace Ecology & Justice



The Centre responds from a Gospel perspective to the regional and global challenges associated with peace, ecology and justice.

JUNE 08

Co-ordinator's Comment

During World Youth Day in July, the PEJ Centre has chosen to use the expressive arts as a medium for awareness-raising about issues of peace, ecology and justice. The reason for this was our connections with two youth theatre groups, *Preda Akbay* in the Philippines and *Cena Um* in Brazil.

Are we so indoctrinated in the power of the written word, especially in an age of information technology, that we forget the power of the arts? This issue of Columban Connections features the arts and Peace, Ecology and Justice. We invite readers who will be on the Central Coast for the Days in the Broken Bay Diocese and in Sydney for World Youth Day week to come along and be part of the Columban Youth Theatre of the Oppressed. We are sure it will be a transformative experience.

I take this opportunity to thank **Michelle Field** for her invaluable assistance in the multitude of planning tasks. Michelle has been doing her internship through Macquarie University with us and will be returning shortly to southern California. We hope her experience in our Mission Institute will be incorporated into her future in a positive way.

Anne Lanyon

What we've been up to

Continuing to Grow Peace in the Community.

A successful **Growing Peace Forum** with the **City of Sydney** was held with 150 people participating. Another one is planned with the **City of Canterbury Council** on June 18th (See **Coming Events**). Recent events in the Camden area of Sydney highlight the need for active community involvement in peacemaking. The PEJ Centre is in the process of planning and producing a DVD to fill this need.

Ecology

Charles Rue chaired another meeting of representatives of religious congregations, tertiary and school education organizations, and Catholic Earthcare to discuss the feasibility of a Sydney Catholic Education for the Environment Centre.

GM Food

Charles spoke in Melbourne on the GM issue at a rally organized by Madge (Mothers Against Genetic Engineering) www.madge.org.au/ PEJ has joined a Sydney based coalition to speak out about the introduction of GM food in NSW.

Chocolate Briefing

Anne Lanyon facilitated a briefing by **Trish Hyde**, the CEO of the Confectionery Manufacturers of Australia on industry efforts to improve labour practices on West African cocoa farms. Attending were a Fair Trade Association representative, **Danny Long** of the Edmund Rice Centre, students and teachers from Monte Saint Angelo North Sydney and St Columba's Springwood, and Jubilee Australia representatives. While the language of the industry suggests that the wellbeing of the farmers is their concern, the reality is different. We need to keep up the pressure on chocolate manufacturers and promote fair trade products.

www.globalexchange.org/campaigns/fairtrade/5539.html

Completing The Lantern Sets.

For the last two and a half years, the PEJ Centre has been coordinating the production of the twelve issues of this colourful, informative resource on evangelization. Full sets are now complete and are available in an attractive recycled polypropylene folder. They will be on sale at the Columban Youth Theatre of the Oppressed or available by phoning the PEJ Centre.

Our thanks go to:

- Our subscribers who have used them in many creative ways,
- The many people whose stories are featured,
- The graphic artist, **Nicki Ciotolo** for her excellent presentation,
- **Graham English**, the cartoonist, for his talent and generosity.



Pacific Peacebuilding Institute

The CMI recently became a member of this peace institute and hosted the Annual General Meeting. (See **Coming Events** for course details).

Editor: **Jack Evans**

All over the world, artists are using their talents to make visible the abuse of power, highlight the futility of violence and help bring about peace.

Film: "Soldiers of Peace"

This film illustrates the connections between individual acts of heroism and the systematic changes we now need, if we are to survive the 21st Century. The film depicts the reconciliation between IRA bomber **Patrick Magee** and the daughter of one of his victims; religious fundamentalists in Nigeria who now preach peaceful co-existence; the Colombian musician **Cesar Lopez**, who makes guitars from AK47 machine guns, and many others who are making a difference.

www.visionofhumanity.org/index.php

Dance: Artistic liberty

In Guatemala City, the young members of Caja Lúdica arts collective are, as one of them puts it, 'fighting for peace'. Their weapons are music, dance and carnival, and their battle plan is to recapture public spaces for enjoyment and togetherness. When the bullets are flying overhead in Guatemala City's most notorious slums, it might seem hard to grasp exactly how stiltwalking could help stop the shooting. www.christianaid.org.uk

Sculpture: Turning weapons into art.

"We could use other materials, but guns give more meaning because we talk about peace by destroying its opposite," said **Cristovao Canhavato**, a member of **Nucleo de Arte**, the oldest collective of artists in Mozambique, which started making sculptures from decommissioned weapons in 1997 after the war. www.azstarnet.com/sn/printDS/109460

Members made works of art out of AK 47 machine guns, landmines and hand weapons. Invincible optimism, resilience and confidence in human capacity take shape in the sculptures. This art says: Wars can be overcome, Reconciliation is possible.



Gun-sculptor **Hilario Nhatugueja** who specializes in making birds says: "Those guns that made us suffer... Those guns that had been killing our family... What

before was an instrument used to kill people, today it's turned to something that ...can demonstrate to people what is our feeling, that we hate war now.. it is an artwork for pleasure. [It is] something for contemplation," *Nucleo de Arte*
<http://www.africaserver.nl/nucleo/eng/>

Cartoons: Why?



"Cartoons can be instruments of change. They invite us to see the universe in a different way. Like all metaphors their job is to disorient us and maybe reorient us if they are good enough. I am interested in whether cartoons can reorient us religiously.

Picasso said once when asked to explain a painting, 'I would not have needed to draw it if I could have said it.' [Graham English]

Dr Graham English is Senior Lecturer in Religious Education, Australian Catholic University, Strathfield Campus. His paper **Cartoons and Christians: Do Cartoons have a place in Religious Discourse?** can be accessed at http://dlibrary.acu.edu.au/research/theology/ejournal/aejit_5/english.htm

I'm just not interested in the answers to questions I'm not asking.



Art for the Environment

The United Nations Art for the Environment initiative aims to generate environmental awareness using the universal language of art as a catalyst for individuals, communities and leaders to focus on environmental values.

UNEP's principal partner in the Art for the Environment initiative is the Natural World Museum (NWM), based in San Francisco, USA. Together, UNEP and NWM are promoting the creation and installation of a growing number of exhibits around the world, in conjunction with major events such as World Environment Day (5 June) and the UNEP Champions of the Earth awards.

UNEP hopes that, by sharing artists' sensitivity to the plight of the planet in works of art ranging from ancient and indigenous objects to contemporary forms and multimedia visions, they can promote a deeper understanding and connection to our natural world. www.unep.org/art_env/

Artistic Kids Keen On Environment!!

Fairfield Water Warriors was a project conducted at the Fairfield Public School, NSW, designed to educate the school community about the need to save water – at school and at home.

Sandy Wilder, Community Educator, and members of the **Fairfield City Council's Waste Management team** designed and ran education sessions involving the student environment group and two classes with their teachers and, later, with community artist **Fida Haq**. The education process with the students covered such



things as the water cycle, measuring water wastage from running taps and advice on effective water management.

Fida worked with the classes on two occasions encouraging and assisting them to visually express their ideas through art.

He then developed the design for a large mural based on the student's own work and their engagement with the Council's members. This was submitted for review to key members of the school's environment committee, other teachers and the school principal. After feedback the design was adjusted and then applied to a wall near the wash area in the school.

Not just a bag

XS Project started as an artist's expression against the impact of consumerism on the environment. It evolved into a foundation which uses design & education to clean up the environment and help Indonesia's poor. Each handmade one-of-a-kind product is manufactured using consumer waste. <http://xsproject.com.au>
For more links and ideas see *Sustainable Fashion Resources* www.teach sustainability.com.au/

Songs, Laughter and the Environment

- Dermot Dorgan

I am a songwriter and singer, much of whose material focuses on social justice, peace and the environment, usually using humour to sugar the pill.

I started to write this material because it was fun – people seemed to respond to a funny song about say, global warming, more positively than they would to a serious talk on the subject (which I also used to do).

Music can get to places in the human heart that mere words can't, and I was trying to move people rather than just inform them or entertain them. Make them laugh, but make them think as well.

Humour can be used to present unpalatable truths in an unthreatening way, ("Where are you now that we need you Noah? We've all become endangered species now."), just as a clown can make us laugh at our own flaws and vulnerabilities without being offensive.

Working for social justice, we're trying to give life to a vision of a new society (for Christians, the vision of the reign of God). This vision has to be imagined before it can be built. By using humour, we can say things that are outrageous to conventional wisdom, but which can sow the seeds of an alternative future - "what if schools were properly funded and the army had to hold cake stalls to buy a new tank?"

Dermot Dorgan has produced two self-published albums of songs and is working on a third. He can be contacted on (07) 3391 5159 or at PO Box 8409, Woolloongabba, Qld 4102.

Arts As Social Commentary - *Augusto Boal*

Throughout history, artists have been social documenters, visionaries and commentators on issues of importance to all humankind. In all areas of human experience, especially in times of oppression, persecution and social injustice, people have always looked to the arts, (be it in literature, painting, theatre and, in our own day, in film) to raise awareness and engineer change.

A powerful example of the arts, at both the social and individual level, to effect change can be seen today in the works of theatre director **Augusto Boal**.

A Brazilian of Portuguese parentage, Boal developed The **Theatre of the Oppressed (TO)** during the 1950s and 1960s. The Theatre of the Oppressed redefined the common understanding of theatre for it is theatre *with* rather than *for* audiences. "It is *theatre* in this most archaic application of the word. In this usage, all human beings are *Actors (they act!)* and *Spectators (they observe!)*. They are *Spect-Actors*." (Boal).

Theatre of the Oppressed was first used by peasants and workers; later, by teachers and students; now, also by artists, social workers, psychotherapists, NGOs... At first, in small, almost clandestine places, now it is in the streets, schools, churches, trade-unions, regular theatres, prisons...

Theatre of the Oppressed is a powerful tool of advocacy, a tool for social change, so powerful that Boal has been nominated for the 2008 Nobel Peace Prize

For further information go to:

www.theatreoftheoppressed.org and
<http://dramaresource.com/index.php/Secondary/Introduction-to-Boal.html>

Introducing *Cena Um* - Brazil

The Dance Company, **Cena Um**, aims to develop self-esteem in youth who suffer racial discrimination on a daily basis.

It is an NGO, whose full title is "*Espaço Cultural Cena Um*" (**Scene One Theatre**), and was inaugurated on June 13th, 2002. It is composed of two performance companies located in a popular beachside suburb of Salvador, Brazil called Ribeira. "**Cena**" (**Scene**) indicates that the medium of theatre is our chosen means of expression, while "**Um**" (**One**) signifies the first step in the journey of social transformation, the questioning of the reality in which we live.

The principal objectives are to offer performances of drama and dance that question our reality, especially the racial discrimination and prejudice in which Brazil's Afro and indigenous populations live. Secondly, it seeks to promote self-esteem and empowerment in the arts by

providing the young members of *Cena Um* to showcase their talents.

Through the dance form, we believe we are helping to implement a law enacted in 2003 making obligatory the teaching of African history and Culture, and Afro-Brazilian history and culture, in primary and secondary schools. Such topics were deliberately kept out of the school curriculum in the past.

Fr Colin McLean is an Australian priest of St Columban's Mission Society whose parish is Salvador in Bahia, Brazil where the majority of the population is Afro-Brazilian (descendants of African slaves). 44% of the national population is Afro-Brazilian, but the concentration in Salvador is more like 80%.

Introducing *PRED A Akbay Advocacy Theatre Group* - Philippines

There is hardly a stronger way to bring home to people the damage and loss brought about by the exploitation of young people and the terrible consequences of environmental destruction than through the power of live theater.

The *AKBAY Advocacy Theatre Group* was organized to advance the advocacy on the Rights of the Children and Youth Empowerment. Its main thrust is to raise the consciousness of the general public regarding social issues confronting the children and youth using theater as an effective tool.

The theatre group is being trained in partnership with the **Philippine Educational Theatre Association (PETA)**. Under PETA's tutelage, the theater group undergoes series of training and workshops to enable the actors themselves to write the scripts, create props and costumes, and to design the production sets. The theatre group consists of dedicated advocates of children's rights and defenders of the environment.

The musical "Once We Had A Dream" tells a moving story of love, tragedy and redemption. They are playing out true events that they have personally experienced and this gives the musical drama integrity and an intensity that will have you on the edge of your emotional seats.

Among Akbay's many aims is the bringing together of young people of Zambales and Olongapo to a program of artistic interactions and productions toward a year-round program of theatre arts training workshops. Another aim is to provide venues for developing and enhancing this knowledge and these skills of young people so they can develop into more dynamic socio-culturally conscious young artists. As a group they can become an effective advocacy unit in educating the public about the various social issues and campaigns initiated by the Preda project.

The Preda Foundation was initiated by Columban Fr Shay Cullen.

Coming Events

June

14th Workshop: *Militarisation: Guam and the Pacific, US base*, Carlton, Vic, ph Nic Maclellan 0421 840 100
www.mapw.org.au

17th World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought.
www.unccd.int/publicinfo/june17/2005/menu.php

18th Growing Peace in Canterbury

A Peace Forum put on by Canterbury City Council, the Columban Centre for Peace Ecology and Justice and the Centre for Christian Muslim Relations
Ph Anne Lanyon 02 9352 8021 to register.

July

1st – 4th Conference: *Activating Human Rights and Peace: Universal Responsibility*, Byron Bay NSW,
www.scu.edu.au/research/cpsj/human_rights/index.html

7th – 9th G8 Summit, Hokkaido Toyaka
www.g8summit.go.jp/eng/indexhtml

6th – 13th NAIDOC Week

9th – 12th National Environmental Education Conference, Darwin www.cdu.edu.au/ehs/AAEE/

10th – 15th Camp for Climate Action, Newcastle NSW
www.climatecamp.org.au/

25th Schools Tree Day

www.planetark.com/campaignspage

25th – 27th Tear National Conference “*On Earth as in Heaven*” www.tear.org.au/education/conferences/

27th National Tree Day

www.planetark.com/campaignspage

August

16th – 24th National Science Week
www.planetark.com/campaignspage

25th – 31st Keep Australia Beautiful Week
www.kab.org.au/

September: Biodiversity Month

www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/month.html

1st Wattle Day www.wattleday.asn.au/

7th National Threatened Species Day

www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/threatened/ts-day/index.html

13th, 14th Sustainable House Day

www.solarhouseday.com/index01.shtml

22nd World Car-Free Day

www.worldcarfree.net/wcfd/

October 5th to November 22nd

Peacebuilders International 2008 Course:

An intensive training course in Peace Building for participants from the Australian, Pacific and Asian region to take back to their own communities. **The venue is the The King's School, North Parramatta, Sydney.** This course can be taken for the purposes of training or for credit.

The Columban Mission Institute has recently become a member of Pacific Peacebuilders International. Below is the timetable.

2008 Schedule

October 5th Enrolment, Orientation

6th - 10th Session 1, Fundamentals of Peacebuilding

13th - 17th Session 2, Principles and Practices for NonViolent Relations

20th - 24th Session 3, Gender and Peacebuilding OR Community based Trauma Healing

27th – 31st Session 4

November 3rd – 7th Session 5, From Despair to Hope: Protecting and Empowering Refugees and IDPs OR Reconciliation Processes in Cultures of the Pacific

10th - 14th Session 6, Forgiveness at a National Level OR Christian Theology of Reconciliation and Just Peace

17th - 21st Session 7, Developing Peacebuilding Initiatives OR Sustaining Peacebuilders

22nd Graduation and Celebration

For further Information:

*Ph 02 9086 9365, or email office@ppbi.org.au
www.ppbi.org.au*

Columban Centre for Peace, Ecology and Justice, 167 Albert Rd, Strathfield
Postal Address: Locked Bag 2002, Strathfield NSW 2135
Phone(02) 9352 8021 Fax (02) 9746 8033 Email: pej.cmi@columban.org.au



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www.columban.org.au

