With this issue, we are re-launching our magazine, Reflections. We have a whole new format and we are making it an annual publication so you will have a lot more to read and you will be introduced to different voices and a variety of perspectives. We are including many more student perspectives, especially of those who benefited from the Center’s programs. The magazine is now also designed to serve as a reflection of our programs of the past year and to chart our direction for the coming year.

As the Director of the Center I take great pride in all our achievements this past year. You will find our impressive list of programs and activities listed in the section “Looking Back…” Equally a matter of pride is our Alumni Spotlight section, which highlights three of the students whose paths have crossed ours at the Center. Kyrsie Lane, one of the contributors to this section, has been associated with the Center since its inception and her excitement and growth in her job in CSUMB is not something we want to take credit for but one that we certainly take great joy in showcasing. Our other two alumni, Omar Salem and Audrey Metcalf, are embarking on new journeys and we are eager to keep track of their progress. All three of them have either specialized in conflict resolution or are pursuing a certificate.

We had three major programs this year that drew students: the Peacebuilders Fellowship and our two field courses, Challenges to Peacebuilding in Mindanao and The Praxis of Conflict Transformation in Los Angeles. You will find the stories as told by the students from each of these three programs in the People, Culture, Art and Field Musings sections. It was quite a process and much hard work on my part to get the student articles ready for publication but I am delighted with the results and it certainly gave me an opportunity to once again work closely with them as we reflected on our shared experiences. In our People section the students tell the story of a person who made a significant impact on them in the places they traveled to. Every story is of an ordinary individual – a principal, a mural artist, a former gang member, a priest and a social activist – who are making great contributions to peace. You will be inspired reading this section. The Culture section is a humorous account of what we deal with as foreigners in the distant lands we visit. Our Art section is a must read. Myshel Prasad is an artist and her interpretation of the artwork of Kublai Millan that we saw in Mindanao but never really understood then is fascinating, and so is her representation of the history of the conflict in Mindanao through her poem. In the Field Musings section, students reflect deeply on issues of gentrification in Los Angeles, the role of food in the conflict in Mindanao and on peace and reconciliation efforts in Northern Ireland.

In our featured article, Kathryn Podebig reminds us that there is more than one party to the conflict in Mindanao and why some of the other on-going peace processes in the region deserve our attention and not just the more well-known peace agreement between the Government of
Philippines and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). Her comment is of particular importance to us as she sent three of her students with us to Mindanao and actively followed us in our journey.

Our book review and opinion piece are closely tied. Both deal with the issue of terrorism; the book, The Terrorist’s Son provides a humane account of how one person and his family deal with the label of terrorism while Michael Davis, U.S. War College Fellow at MIIS, argues in his opinion piece that the field of conflict and terrorism studies need to come together to formulate effective policy – a policy that is both humane, devoid of labels and which takes into consideration national security interests.

My cover story is about Peace or about the confusions and complexities around the word “peace.” It is an unfinished discussion and a representation of my life-long quest to find ways to build peace in this conflict-ridden world.

As you reflect on these many stories of violence and peace, I leave you with the same question I explored in my piece. Peace – what is it to you? And what is your path to peace?

Pushpa Iyer
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