

PEACE & CONCILIATION
PROJECT FRAMEWORK

THE PEACE AND CONCILIATION PROJECT is a peace-building framework built around dialogue processes that addresses the need for atonement with populations of people who were harmed in the formation and development of the United States and whose well-being continues to be harmed today. With the understanding that the context in which violence was and continues to be perpetrated against each population of people is different and will involve different stakeholders, the Peace and Conciliation Project proposes the framework be applied to each population via contextually relevant processes in order to produce contextually and culturally relevant outcomes. The framework suggests a comprehensive approach to the transformation of conflict designed to address structural issues, social dynamics of relationship building, and the development of supportive infrastructure for sustainable peace.

RELATIONSHIPS ARE AT THE CENTER OF THE PEACE AND CONCILIATION PROJECT

RELATIONSHIPS

Relationships are at the center of the Peace and Conciliation Project, which envisions the protracted conflict between the harmed parties and white Americans as a system and directs all attention in the design of the framework toward the reconciliation of those relationships. The framework is designed to create opportunities and spaces for those who have been harmed to express past and present traumas, losses, grief, anger, pain, and memories — both individual and collective — and to have these important elements of their identity acknowledged, atoned for, and addressed in a manner most suited to the individuals and communities at local and regional levels.

Acknowledgement, by the stakeholders who are empowered to be change-makers, is the first step toward envisioning a new, shared future. Because the reconciliation of relationships requires that the parties address and overcome hatred, prejudice, racism, and xenophobia as primary contributors to protracted conflict, the transformation and transcendence of the conflict is inherently a spiritual process and requires a framework that allows for the emergence of spirit — an aspect of our shared humanity that can serve as a key space for finding common ground.

In addition to the harmed parties, the key stakeholders to the Peace and Conciliation Project include city leadership such as the city mayor and city council; local politicians; community leaders such as religious leaders and thought leaders in issues relevant to the harmed parties; leaders of law enforcement organizations; representatives from businesses; leaders from nonprofit organizations who are relevant to the reconciliation process; educational organizations; and all other parties identified through the dialogue preparation and implementation process who have either been harmed or are critical to the reparation of the harm.

STRUCTURE

The Peace and Conciliation Project framework utilizes a structural pyramid outlined in Paul Lederach's book *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*. The pyramid demonstrates three major leadership categories that are relevant to peace building and the power each holds to be change-makers.

Within the framework of the Peace and Conciliation Project, Level 1 Leadership is comprised of the highest level representatives from each harmed community within a city or region; high-level city officials (mayor and city council); high-level business executives such as corporate CEOs; high-level law enforcement officers such as the chief of police; members from the city's board of education; etc. All of these individuals sit in powerful positions within the city and have the authority to authorize funding and to implement policies that those who function under them must comply with.

Level 2 Leadership includes individuals from the following groups of people:

- Leaders within a community who are highly respected as individuals or who hold positions of leadership in sectors such as business, education, health care, etc.
- High profile people within primary networks of groups and institutions who are able to link religious groups, academic institutions and/or humanitarian organizations together.
- Thought leaders within communities relevant to the conflict.

A key feature of Level 2 Leadership is their ability to move up and down the pyramid.

They know or have access to Level 1 Leadership and also have direct access to the constituency that Level 1 Leaders claim to represent but are typically detached from. In other words, they are influential both up and down the pyramid. Level 2 Leaders are unique in that they are not bound by the same level of political and social restrictions or calculations prevalent to Level 1 Leadership, and they also have first-hand knowledge of the context and experiences of the people living at the grassroots level — those individuals most severely affected by the conflict.

From the perspective of the Peace and Conciliation Project, Level 2 Leadership might consist of well-respected ministers; well-respected school administrators; members of a PTA; business leaders; law enforcement officers who hold sway with their peers; etc. Level 2 Leaders are of paramount importance to the Peace and Conciliation Project because the grassroots level respect and trust them. Level 2 Leadership will be the partners who encourage participation and help to cultivate awareness about the project while fostering relationships built on trusts with all levels of leadership and the Peace and Conciliation Project.

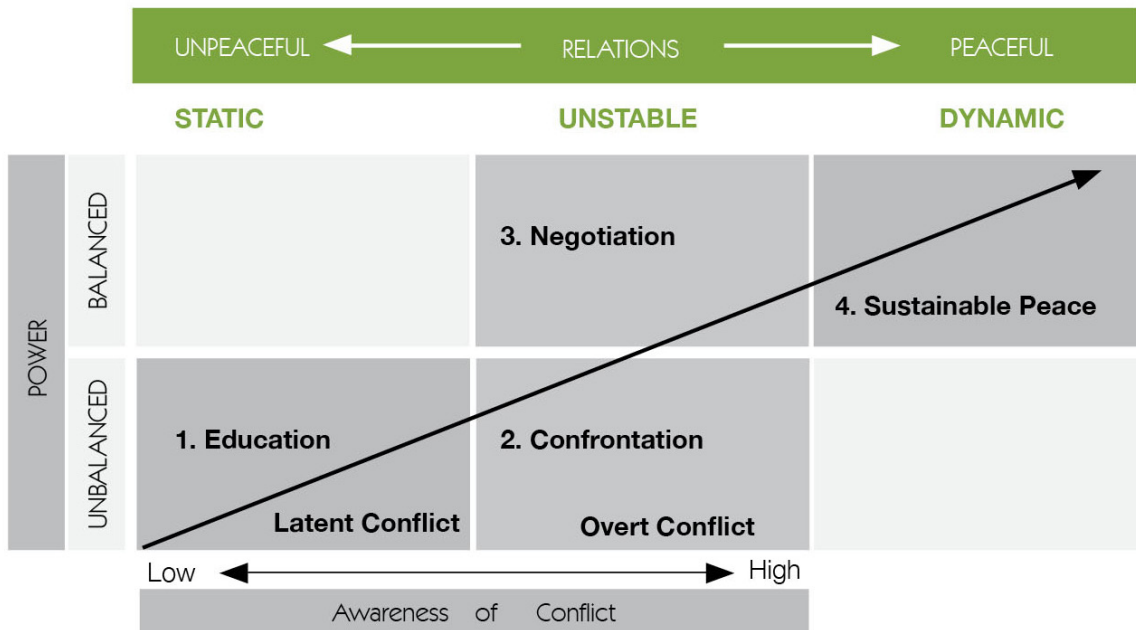


Level 3 Leadership is the grassroots leadership who represents the masses — the individuals and communities directly affected and engaged in the conflict. Leaders at the grassroots level include local communities, members of indigenous nongovernmental organizations who serve those most impacted by the conflict, health officials, teachers, social workers, community organizers, etc. Leadership at the grassroots level is intimately familiar with the fear, pain, and suffering the population has endured and continues to live with on a daily basis. They have expert knowledge of local politics and can pick up the phone and call local leaders on both sides of the conflict. They are in the trenches with those most affected by the conflict.

Level 3 Leadership serves dual roles in the Peace and Conciliation Project. They are necessary advocates of the project, being its voice to the community. And, because they bring so much firsthand knowledge of the impact of the conflict, they are also active participants in the dialogue process. Level 3 Leadership are critical stakeholders in the success of the dialogue processes, the development of the reparations planning, and the successful rollout of the reparations.

PROCESS

Adam Curie, Quaker conciliator and mediator, suggests that, “Conflict moves along a continuum from unpeaceful to peaceful relationships.” In his book, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*, Paul Lederach explains that, “This movement can be charted on a matrix that compares two key elements: the level of power between the parties in conflict and the level of awareness of conflicting interests and needs.” From a system designs perspective, the matrix assists peace builders in identifying where in the progression the conflict is located.



Source: Adam Curie, *Making Peace*

Throughout the United States there is a varying degree of awareness and acknowledgment of the conflicts that affect oppressed populations on a daily basis. Some cities and regions have an acute awareness while others have either no awareness or perhaps even perceive white Americans as the victims of structural oppression and violence. Because of this varying degree of awareness, the Peace and Conciliation Project must be able to plot where in the progression of a conflict each city and/or region resides.

THE MOVEMENT TOWARD PEACE CAN BE UNDERSTOOD THROUGH ROLES THAT EMERGE IN CONFLICT VIA FOUR MAJOR STAGES.

Quadrant 1 represents latent conflict. Latent conflict is the conflict that exists when people are unaware of the injustice and lack of balance of power that affects their lives. At this stage, Curies recommends education in the form of “conscientization.” In other words, through education, the injustice and power imbalance is brought to conscious awareness. The educator must erase ignorance and raise awareness to the imbalances of power and justice as well as help people understand why equity is necessary. Without this level of education, the needs of the oppressed party are rarely acknowledged much less understood by those benefiting from the status quo. Advocates who work with those or support those who are pursuing change are necessary to perpetuate the message. The Peace and Conciliation Project will address this stage via conferences, educational materials, and training on how to use them. Education may be conducted via in-person seminars, digital media (blogs, social media, online platforms for social engagement); traditional media such as op-ed pieces for newspapers and online media; photo journalism, and other forms of artistic expression such as music, poetry and film; face-to-face conversations; formal training seminars, etc. The Peace and Conciliation Project will develop the messaging, provide printable curriculum online and make all educational resources available for download from the website at no cost to the user.

Quadrant 2 demonstrates how the pursuit of change inevitably leads to confrontation, which brings the conflict out of its latent state and to the surface of people’s awareness. A series of choices must be made at this stage. How will the conflict be expressed? How will the concerns be addressed? The Peace and Conciliation Project addresses choice points in the dialogue process. Facilitators will receive training on how to guide the dialogue process in such a way that high-stakes conversations are possible even when they feel risky and dangerous. Confrontation is a necessary stage to resolution.

Quadrant 3 addresses the rebalancing of power that is necessary in order for relationships to be reconciled and those involved in the conflict are able to recognize one another in new and reimagined ways. This recognition is intended to increase the voice of the less powerful so that they may begin to express the specific needs that must be addressed. The rebalancing of power legitimates the concerns of the less powerful. This is the stage where negotiation can begin to occur. And the groups begin to work together in mutual recognition. The Peace and Conciliation Project will need to engage and/or train dialogue facilitators with sophisticated transformative mediation and interest-based negotiation skills.

Quadrant 4 is where successful negotiation and mediation bring about the restructuring of the relationship and the substantive and procedural concerns are established as legitimate. Reparations dialogue can occur at this stage. Curie refers to this stage as “increased justice” or “more peaceful relations.” The Peace and Conciliation Project assists in the development, documentation, archiving and negotiations of reparations in partnership with all stakeholders.

RESOURCES

Acquiring resources are, of course, a necessary element of any peace-building initiative. The Peace and Conciliation Project will require significant resources in two key areas: 1) Operational resources dedicated to running the Peace and Conciliation Project (i.e., staffing, marketing, educational programming development, funds to pay facilitators, funds to pay for a corporate office and renting facilitation space, etc.); 2) Resource allocation commitments from governmental entities for the implementation of reparations.

It will be incumbent upon the founders and partners of the Peace and Conciliation Project to be able to communicate how this project benefits all of society and how making right the wrong done to harmed populations is not only the morally correct action to take but also the fiscally responsible action to take while communicating a strategy that demonstrates long-term viability. The ability to establish and communicate how this initiative brings value to all Americans will be an essential element of procuring an on-going supply of funding from individuals, corporations and foundations.

COORDINATION

Coordination involves connecting each of the framework’s elements together to more fully vet the validity of each and to find more exact points of contact and coordination in order to get the most out of each contribution. Below are some examples of how The Peace and Conciliation Project coordination might be accomplished.

- **Develop a peace inventory.** This is a wide-ranging inventory of who is doing what kind of peace building as it relates to race relations work in the United States. This inventory will assist in relationship-building between middle-range and grassroots levels; combining efforts for research; knowledge-sharing between organizations; partnering on initiatives that are common to multiple organizations’ missions; cultivating the widespread sense of shared responsibility.
- **Create clearer channels between the three leadership levels.** Creating and/or improving channels of communication between the leadership levels can be accomplished through the establishment of coordinated committees that bridge the communication gap between the top and middle range levels.
- **Create peace-donor conferences.** Engaging donors and keeping them abreast of successes and projected needs are critical. Donor conferences can focus around annual reporting accomplishments as well the reporting of challenges faced. This is an important way to engage donors and keep them connected and excited about the work of project.
- **Create strategic resource groups.** Strategic resource groups are designed to bring “broad-based resources to bear on the overall design of the process and on specific dilemmas faced at particular stages in the transformation of the conflict.” The resource groups provide the space and opportunity for sharing ideas

and expertise for people working in race relations work in the United States and abroad. Resource groups comprised of researchers, academic experts and “on-the-ground” implementation experts are able to provide feedback and improvements on overall design.

The key to coordination is to create feedback loops designed to continuously improve upon the design of the system and therefore the outcomes of it.

CONCLUSION

The Peace and Conciliation Project is long over due. For too long Americans have been complicit in the violence perpetrated against oppressed population by turning a blind eye, not standing up to injustice, or by actively participating in the violence. This project is an attempt to right the wrong done to millions of Americans and their ancestors so that together we may forge new relationships and give birth to the possibility of creating a more perfect union. To be successful, it will require the partnership of hundreds of people, and the participation of thousands. It will be an undertaking that may take more than a lifetime to fully implement, and it must be done.