

*In a world where  
killing is sport,  
war is entertainment,  
betrayal is common.*

*How do we make  
peace?*

**November 17 - 19, 2014  
St. Louis, Missouri  
received**

**THE INVITATION**  
to respond



**By May, the arrangements for THE INVITATION to be brought to "Joe's kids" were finalized.**

**November 18th, we expected to perform the play to a high school age audience for the first time.**

**None of us anticipated the single incident on the afternoon of August 9th.**

Betty Williams' words echo in my mind when I think about Ferguson: *"A deep sense of frustration was already evident before the tragic events of that sunny afternoon August 10, 1976."*

Here we stood, a continent away, almost 38 years later *to the day*. In Northern Ireland, it had been *"the deaths of four young people in a lone terrible act of violence."* In Ferguson, Missouri, it was the fatal shooting of a single 18-year-old African-American by a 28-year-old Caucasian police officer who was responding to

a 911 call.

None of us knew that what happened in Ferguson, a St. Louis suburb of little more than 20,000, would become the focal point for the world's conscience. Yet it did. Organized and independent media decided to use the events of that day – an occurrence that we must admit happens each day somewhere in the U.S. – to create a fiery global debate on race, justice, and compassion.

History was repeating itself, as those of us who receive and give THE INVITATION are in a position to keenly see. Both events "caused frustration to explode, creating a possibility for a real peace movement." Yet, as has seemed historically the case, human nature finds it difficult to make different choices even midst the higher calling toward a better judgement. Each of our laureates met the challenge in their own nature by responding to the universal needs at the time.

The needs of this time seemed endless after August 9th.

In the wake of that first week after the Ferguson shooting, I met my own human tendency for regret, sadness, and depression. "Why Ferguson?" "Why now?" "Why THE INVITATION?" I did not flinch when my heart grew heavy. I did not run away from doubt, the source of my discomfort. I stood still, not paralyzed. Peaceful, not agitated. I wanted answers, and I knew they would rise from the wellspring of wisdom within. It was this intent behind the questions that kept my mind open to enlightenment.

The challenges of imagination can only be met in the Truth of the present moment. The facts were on November 17 and 18, **THE INVITATION**, a play about peace, was scheduled to be given in St. Louis. The cast and crew, all teachers at the School of Metaphysics, would come from every direction to meet in St. Louis to be in that present moment. I saw the hand of Divine Providence at work in my world, in *the* world, preparing hearts and minds to receive a greater Truth. **THE INVITATION**, and everyone associated with it, was entering a new era.

When we arrived on November 16th, rumors were flying that the grand jury decision could be announced anytime. That would put the city in lock-down preventing us from giving the play. It didn't matter.

I knew we were not only walking into history, we were making it.

Joe Pecaut wanted to bring **THE INVITATION** to 'his kids'. Joe is a divinity and business teacher at Cardinal Ritter College Prep, a high school in St. Louis that serves African-American students. Joe and his students were why **THE INVITATION** was in the right place at the right time for the right people.



The thought of placing high school age souls in the same room for an hour with Albert, Linus, Martin, Betty, Alva, Shirin, Tenzin and Agnes was thrilling. Seeing the play is the first step toward performing it for others. To spark samadhi, the highest thought, in individuals during the challenging and sometimes troubling teen years is a fulfillment of the play's purpose. It would elevate us to higher ground in our efforts to bring the message of **THE INVITATION** to the world.

Joe and I talked about the "laureates" meeting with students following the performance. Joe wanted his students to interact with mine as much as I wanted mine to interact with his. We both held high expectations of the enrichment of all concerned. Those expectations provided a bounty.

A shot in Ferguson had awakened the slumbering, and they were ready to tell their dreams. All they needed was a listener. **THE INVITATION** supplied them plenty. I asked the teacher-laureates to be the scribes, to record what happened when they met with the students that day. Those stories, their dreams, now become ours.

I find, as I trust you will, that something shifts inside us when "we vow to speak with sagacity, listen with equanimity, both free of prejudice." Conscience is aroused, and a real peace movement begins.

*–Barbara O'Guinn Condron, creator of **THE INVITATION***

*What happened when high school students met  
THE INVITATION's peace laureates?*

Tuesday morning November 18th, 2014, history was made as THE INVITATION was offered in St. Louis for the students from three high schools. Cardinal Ritter College Prep, a private school for primarily African-American youth, hosted students from St. Mary's High School a private school serving young men in St. Louis and from McCluer, a public high school in the Ferguson-Florissant District, the northern suburb which became the focus of a media storm three months earlier when a young black man died at the hands of a white police officer. CR Teacher Joe Pecaut who teaches Divinity and Business, who brought THE INVITATION to St. Louis, arranged for the cast and its playwright to meet with students afterward. –Ed.



***“As I sat in the Peace Dome during the 40 for 40 in October 2013 and listened to the Dalai Lama give a speech, I was moved and I wanted others to experience what I had experienced. I knew I wanted THE INVITATION to come to St. Louis and I wanted my students from Cardinal Ritter College Prep (CRCP) to experience it. I told Larry Hudson and I told everyone else that we should bring this to St. Louis.”***

*– Joe Pecaut, the teacher who brought  
THE INVITATION to his high school*

## **PEACE....**

***is built through communication*** –from Linda Pecaut, Maplewood Teacher and Coordinating Assistant

The energy was palpable with a full audience by high school students and faculty. The choir was poised at the end of the Commons and got everyone's attention when they began to sing. All heads turned to their voices.

Once the Laureates began to walk in, heads turned, searching for the source of their voices. The connection made by each of the students as they walked towards the stage was evident.

I was mostly amazed that after having seen the play several times I still heard “brand new” lines, phrases, words that directly spoke to the upheaval in Ferguson and St. Louis. I expected it from Martin Luther King, but heard something from everyone. I know that many seeds have been planted in those young minds. Some may sprout in the next few days, others may wait for years; they've been sown.

I spoke to the St. Mary's men while waiting for Dr. Barbara Condron and they politely listened. When she arrived, they connected – maybe a little standoffish but they connected. I love how she encouraged them to write letters to the media to tell them their story/experience. She affirmed the power of their youth – their influence. I know she got their attention. Even Ms. Pera, the Campus Minister, was greatly impacted.

For me, the experience was beyond words, beyond emotions. I felt a strong, loving energy – a healing field – touching all in the audience, especially me.



***PEACE is achieved by those who fulfill their part  
of a greater plan***



*—from Debbie Hudson, Director of Maplewood School of Metaphysics, sponsor*

THE INVITATION performance with the students of Cardinal Ritter was extraordinary! It went far beyond expectation. As the performance began, I sat back overlooking the full room of over 200 students. I welled up with tears. The laureates were at their best giving with love and passion.

The students received as only high school students world, some with awe and enraptured attention and others with a restless and self-conscious response. Over all they were friendly, warm and polite, realizing there was something very special to regard.

Hearing the laureates share their experiences in the classrooms there was excitement in their voices and light in their yes. They knew they were received and they in turn realized how much they had to give.

This was a Circle of Love experience, one of giving and receiving and I am grateful and better for it. •

*—from Roberto Czares, Peace Ambassador from Bolingbrook, IL*

As I see the faces of the students walking in, it reminds me of my youth. How we are changing the vibration and feeling of these students. The great joy within myself of knowing we are change the future. Seeing and knowing some of these great young teens as Jasmine. She has a powerful sense of helping others and the ability to spread peace along with her classmates. •



*Roberto Czares from Bolingbrook joined Caterina Williams of Maplewood, representing 16 Peace Ambassadors from across the U.S.*

## ***PEACE is our birthright***

*—from Leah Morris, Betty Williams*

At first the kids were distracted. The members of the choir were engaged. They asked me how I prepared to be Betty Williams. I told them about how I studied her and put images with her words. I shared some of her most powerful experiences of struggle.

They asked me what I do for fun, how I earn money. I explained to them what Metaphysics is, they asked me how I found the SOM and how I came to be Betty Williams. I told them about who I was before the course of study and what I learned and who I became. I told them I discovered many of the qualities of Betty within myself.

Then I asked Jayla what she experienced. She shared that she felt very connected to the Laureates when we were in pairs and was happy to be able to be in the choir.

Then I asked them how what happened in Ferguson affected them on a personal level. Dieja said that she has cousins that are in school there and they couldn't even go to school. Now they are very behind. There was unease in her voice as she explained that people who don't even live in Ferguson were crowding the city, just to protest.

It was a fulfilling experience. •

***“...some of the students walked away feeling like they could do great things themselves.”***



*—from Choir Member Rashard Garrett and the next Martin Luther King, Jr.*

I experienced Leah as Betty Williams make a real emotional connection with the audience.

Martin commanded the attention of everyone. I saw the students really dialed in whenever he spoke; seeing somewhat of a representative of themselves.

During the classroom time, students wanted to know what Martin (Terrence) thought about the Ferguson, and how he thought Martin might respond. They were really desiring some direction as to how was the correct way to respond to what was happening.

Through their questions and answers I could see that a number of the students were inspired by the laureates; recognizing that they all came from various backgrounds, ages and genders. I asked them what qualities they thought that all the laureates had in common. They talked about how all laureates responded to a need that they perceived; that they were all courageous, and stood up for what they believed. I got the impression that some of the students walked away feeling like they could do great things themselves.

There was an interesting dynamic in our classroom. Everyone, including the teacher and Terrence and I and every student were all black males. This added a level of intimacy



and familiarity that was unique. I think that caused them to ask more personal questions at times. It also created a connection where the teacher just left them in our hands. At one point, Terrence even “disciplined” one

young man who was not paying attention, and no one batted an eye. Things just kept on moving forward.

As far as my role in the choir, each time I open up my voice a bit more. I'm learning a lot about harmonizing with people. Being able to sense what is needed from you in the moment, becoming a support in a unit. •

## ***PEACE affords the greatest opportunity for growth and learning***

*—from Walter Hyrcaj, His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama*

I was very excited to give this performance to high school students and was also calm and ready to deliver the message. When I walked through the high school crowd while giving my monologue the students were laughing and making fun of the Buddhist robe I was wearing and yet some were quite intent on what I was saying. This was very new for me and I put my skills of everything I am learning in the SOM studies and PSI counseling together.

It's amazing the preparation for this experience and the ability to use the Stargate in that moment. This was first a tolerance lesson and a concentration lesson so that I stayed centered in my core while giving my laureate. I had the realization that this was going to be different and I just carried on like any other holy man would do to give the message we were here to give regardless.



Next, was forgiveness and gratitude. Nothing was going to sway my love for what we were giving. I opened my heart more and continued to smile and stayed centered in my laureate. This seemed to feed more of what I was giving. As a previous bus driver, I have handled high school kids before and I believe that there were things that we said that would sink in no matter what.

I felt like my attention was engaged much more than ever before to have this message be received. My attention went to kindness and then empathy because I remembered what it was like to be a high school student and the peer pressure I encountered. I also remember when I was by myself as a high school student, I would reflect a lot by myself about the day's events. So, I believe things affected these students even if it didn't seem like it.

The classroom was very cool, the students were very respectful and asks awesome questions. They seemed genuinely interested and some knew about Buddhism and the practices. I really loved sharing with them the life of the Dalai Lama and my own experience in the progress and process of embodying His Holiness. I believe harmony came at the end and continued through the classroom experience. •



## ***PEACE be with us all ways***



***“The Third Generation Cast holds a unique learning opportunity that in SOM study is called “the critical, clinical observer”, only in our practice that observer connects one cast with the next. They are active participants in the work of the 2nd cast while observing them in preparation to incarnate as the laureate they wish to embody. This is conscious cocreation of the highest order. Intentionally choosing to bring an archetype of love and compassion into their field of choice. This is why THE INVITATION was brought into being. It is the field of enlightenment created through nine lives - eight recognized as Nobel Peace Laureates and the ninth, the individual - you or I - who brings Light into the world.”*** –Barbara O’Guinn Condron

*–Matt Valois, choir member and the next Dalai Lama*

After the performance of THE INVITATION in the cafeteria at Cardinal Ritter, the laureates and understudies had the opportunity to meet with students in the classroom. Being the Dalai Lama’s understudy, I went into class 219 with Walter Hrycaj and listened to him field questions from the students.

“How long did it take for you to learn the role of the Dalai Lama? How much acting experience did you have?” Shared discussion of what it meant to embody a laureate, and what Walter wanted to get from the experience.

Further questions about “How was the Dalai Lama chosen? Could he say no if he wanted to? Are you a Buddhist? What happened to Tibet?” Started a discussion of culture most of the students, if not all, were unfamiliar with. There wasn’t a point when students were not asking questions, which showed their level of interest for something new, or different.

The teacher of the class said, “This was definitely different. This performance wasn’t like a movie, or a play, or something like that, that you might be most familiar with.”

What was it like to sit still for that long and listen to something that’s mostly dialogue? Responses were varied, some didn’t have any problems listening to the whole thing, others said they liked the different experience. Some felt bad for dozing off because of their short attention span. Most everyone said that there was something that stood out in their minds while listening to THE INVITATION.

When the bell and announcement for change of period occurred, there were smiles on the students’ faces and in their eyes as they lined up to shake Walter’s hand and thank him for talking with them. The opportunity to personally interact with Walter and his experiences with the Dalai Lama created a learning experience kind of like being subjected by a living, breathing dictionary or encyclopedia. •



## **PEACE ... is first a state of mind**

*-from Sydney Kasner, Alva Myrdal*

We just performed THE INVITATION for a high school, this beautiful message was finally brought to the youth in the world. One of the many ways we have made history today. I am so honored to be a part of The Invitation, this specific cast, and for this opportunity today. Speaking to the minds and hearts of these young adults is vitally important in my mind. I do believe that we have brought to them a new perspective of life – some of them aware and some of them not.

One of the things that a senior girl at Cardinal Ritter told me was “I was so moved by the words of Alva when she says, it does not just happen.” She said images of what has happened in Ferguson came flooding to her mind. This violence that is here – it does not just happen. We are responsible for each other, and for our future. •



***“It does not just happen.”***

*– Choir Director and original Alva Myrdal Dr. Pam Blosser and Director of the next cast*

It’s always amazing to me what happens in the process of relating musically with the youth.

I felt it most profoundly when we sang “*One Voice*” in the Assembly. I felt our voices filled up the whole room. When we finished I had to turn around and exclaim, “You sounded great! Our voices filled up the whole room.” Their faces lit up and I realized we had made fast friends. If they saw me in the hall, they gave me a big smile and hello and I did the same.

The song “*One Voice*” had brought as together not only in one voice but one thought and one state of mind. We had a common experience of peace through the words and the music, and in that expression we had received each other.

I went to the classroom with Sydney. It was a room full of females. I thought Alva was a girl just like them who wanted to learn. She pestered her father to get teachers for her and her friends when she could no longer study because there were no schools girls could go to. She wanted to learn and these girls want to learn, and they are doing what they can to get the education they need to serve the world in great ways.

A couple of girls’ comments stood out to me. One girl excitedly said how awesome it was when the Laureates blew out their candles. She didn’t know exactly why, but she knew it was profound and was moved by it. Sydney explained the significance. I found it quite astute of this young woman to notice the movement.

Another young woman commented that she was emotionally moved when Alva and Shirin came together. I think it was how Sydney and Golbahar endeavoring to bridge the gap between them. They had made great progress with their interaction and their reaching out and touching each other in an intimate gesture was palpable to the audience. •

***We learn to love our  
neighbors as we love  
ourselves, bringing PEACE***

—Choir Member Charlotte Crabaugh,  
future Mother Teresa

When I stood with all those young voices and we began to sing together, “*We Shall Overcome*” I felt a wave of energy go through me. It was a realization of the place this moment holds in my life and in our shared history. I am a minority here today; because of my color, because of my age, because of my religious background. I remember singing this song with other groups at other times and places. It always meant that we were determined to find a connection and a realization that we really are one.

I wanted very much for these young black Americans to hear and understand every word the Laureates were saying. I want them to understand how much we have really overcome so that they will know that all the barriers to peace that remain can be overcome also.

It is heartening to see the beautiful state-of-the-art building these young people have to learn in. But more than that, I am grateful to see the spirit of hope and pride that each one of the students I have encountered embodies. •



*The Cardinal Ritter choir under the direction of Judy Jackson.*



*Diana Kenney, Pam Blosser,  
Charlotte Craybaugh*

—from Diana Kenny, choir member and the next Alva Myrdal

Talking with the students was really enjoyable. Jayla, Jasmin, Amari, Demetrian, Alegra – are some of the names of the young people I connected with. I experienced basic human goodness and honesty. Big souls in young bodies, receiving into themselves the stories of THE INVITATION.

Jasmine (who lives in Ferguson) told me she loved the *Peace Covenant*. She has an erasable wall in her room and she is going to write the words of the *Peace Covenant* on it. Amari wants to practice responding to the events with peace. I saw in his eyes the desire to believe it was possible, to live in peace, to respond peacefully. •

***PEACEful coexistence between nations  
is the reflection of man's inner tranquility  
magnified.***

*—from Brenton Harris, Linus Pauling*

In the classroom, I was delighted that Ms. Spain greeted me with an enthusiastic smile.

"I wish this was my genetics class, rather than environmental series," she said. "Linus Pauling did so much work in discovering the structure of proteins, and even tried to unlock the structure of DNA, but mistakenly added that third strand..."

I was amazed that not only did this woman know of Linus, she knew his work and his contribution to science. When I asked her about her experiences teaching, she told me she loves being in the classroom, and that the kids really thirst for knowledge.

While the students were relatively quiet, there were three who asked several questions:

1. Questions about acting, being nervous, performing, etc.
2. Questions about who Linus was, and why he received the Nobel Prize
3. Questions about how to receive a Nobel Prize.

I also found it interesting that when the teacher asked about different laureates being represented in the play she tried to recall the "young girl who won the prize" recently - but couldn't remember her name.

Several students immediately answered in recognition: "Malala". Peace is alive in the new generations on this planet, even if they haven't yet fully realized it.

So grateful to be here!





***Arising from the Spirit  
PEACE seeks expression through the  
mind, heart, and body of each individual.***



*—from Terrence Lamont Bellows  
who portrays Martin Luther  
King, Jr.*

Awe inspiring, wonderful. I could not imagine how this could be a more moving or powerful experience. My growth with receiving emotion and learning how to move through any difficulties is

palpable for me. I am sensitive and secure with being vulnerable now than more than ever. I am able to appreciate the movement of emotion through my consciousness and allow it.

In the gifting of this most recent performance, I heard God in Mother Teresa's voice and purpose. I was greatly affected by Linus Pauling's passion for what it takes to live a good life focused on Universal Brotherhood. I have a great ease, where before, there was anxiety with experience when I was not sure if I would be received.

I am staying in my emotion and being stable-minded. There are some big emotional buildups and moments that demand my full attention that come from Shirin and Betty, and I have in the past attempted to move away or shield myself from feeling the emotion that they deliver. I have been able to poise myself in a much more beneficial way, then I move my giving in the shift of how I receive them, instead of in rejection or opposition, and that causes an ease for me as well as an increase in security.

With the new motion of security my ability to portray MLK is greatly improved. Where I am with understanding of who he was came to light for me and I was challenged to respond from that perspective to the leadership class that I visited about 20 freshman men asked me questions and engaged me with there insight as I was able to give to them from the perspective of the leadership skills I am learning from portraying Martin. •

***"With its message of how to  
be the best that you can be, I  
knew THE INVITATION would  
be a great thing for you.***

***Started discussion last  
spring. Finalized in May. This  
was before everything  
happened in Ferguson. This  
is why I call this all  
Divine Providence.***

***God called for this to be in  
place, for you, before things  
escalated as they are. I want  
to thank God for that."***

*—Joe Pecaut introducing the play  
to his students*



***SOM Director Debbie Hudson, dedicates the special  
performance of THE INVITATION to the youngest Nobel Peace  
Prize laureate, Malala Yousafzai, who will receive the prize in  
December this year.***

## PEACE is active.....



—from Dr. Laurel Clark, originator of Shirin Ebadi role

I received the impression of the laureates on the kids, especially Martin Luther King and Betty Williams. I could feel the kids feeling them.

Most memorable was when the principal asked the laureates how they would respond to the grand jury – hearing them answer through the lens of the laureate seemed to stimulate the kids to imagine how they would respond.

Amy d' Argosa told me she spoke with Marian Rein, the “Good News” newspaper editor. She said Cardinal Ritter was near and dear to her heart (but not how or why) – Amy didn’t know if her son had attended here or not.

Marian wasn’t able to attend at the last minute but she told Amy someone could write an article. I asked Debbie what she thought about Amy writing it – Debbie agreed.

Amy said Marian wanted the article in the context of how THE INVITATION influenced the kids so I asked Joe and Amy if they want to write it together. They agreed. It will be for the December issue so it will be perfect timing for *Universal Hour of Peace*.

One of the Cardinal Ritter students was sitting in front of Amy he had been a student of Amy’s when she taught at a Catholic elementary school. I didn’t know that she had that background (she currently teaches college.) Seeds planted in young minds cause our future – peace is an idea whose time has come. I felt that while singing “We Shall Overcome” – we shall live in peace TODAY. •

December 1, 2014

Dear Dr. Barbara,

I have some exciting news to share with you! Most importantly, you will very happy to know it is not 400 PAGES!! :-)

Marian Rein, the publisher of Java Journal sent me a copy of the edited article for publication in her Java Journal. (See below)

Thank you for inviting Peace into our minds and hearts!

Love You,  
Amy D.



### Positive Role Models

#### A Voice for Peace

by Joe Pecaut, teacher at Cardinal Ritter College Preparatory High School

An inspiring play, titled The Invitation, written by Dr. Barbara Condron, D.D., D.M., B.J., was performed at Cardinal Ritter College Preparatory High School in St. Louis on November 18. ....

After the performance, Michael Blackshear, principal of Cardinal Ritter, asked the students to consider, “What would these laureates ask or do about the recent events in Ferguson, Missouri?” A relative of Michael Brown (shooting victim in Ferguson) is a student at Cardinal Ritter and talked about the effect Michael’s death has had on his family and how they didn’t want Michael’s memory to be one of violence.

The laureate actors visited classrooms to interact with students, responding to their questions and engaging in dialogue about peace and how each laureate made a difference in the world.....



# ***We stand on the threshold of peace-filled understanding.***

*—from Joe Pecaut, Coordinator for THE INVITATION in St. Louis*

Afterwards, five of the students who live in Ferguson shared their thoughts about the events in Ferguson. The students sat in a circle, surrounded by members of the play who simply listened as the students talked. The students shared their confusion about what they have observed happening around them. They were upset that St. Louis and Ferguson were being seen in such a negative light by the world. One student said, “Looting is not protesting.”

Another student shared that she wanted to be a media journalist. She spent time in Ferguson, taking photographs while witnessing the protests. She was encouraged to use her ability to write and photograph what was going on and to be that beacon of light for others. “You can be the difference in your community,” she said.

A play member shared how easy it would have been for him to be a member of a gang, but he chose a different route. He became a student at the School of

Metaphysics and changed his life. He sees the good that he possesses inside of himself, rather than what possessions he could have in the world.

One student talked about having a bag packed at all times, in the event that she and her family would have to flee their home due to community violence when the Grand Jury decision concerning Michael Brown was announced. She said that her father did two tours in Afghanistan and he said he hadn’t seen anything as bad as what transpired in Ferguson for two weeks in August.

The play planted the seeds of peace in many individuals. People want to be heard. These students were given the opportunity to be heard as they talked about the effect the last three months has had on them. These are bright, intelligent young people who are making a difference in St. Louis. Let us all join together to make St. Louis the Gateway to Peace.





## ***Peace is the breath of our Spirit.***

What bitterness that may have sprung from the weeks-long media absorption with what they labeled the Michael Brown case, was sweetened considerably by another event two months later. This was the announcement that Malala Yosafzai, a 17-year-old Pakistani girl, would share the 2014 Nobel Peace Prize.

Malala came to my attention three years ago, when she was shot in the head by a Taliban gunman who wanted to silence her demands that girls have the right to an education. The media covered that story for less than a week.

At close range, the shot should have ended her life, yet she did not become a martyr. She lives, retaining her cognitive and motor skills including speech, to carry her message that education is the answer to all the complicated global problems. And to inspire her generation to be the change they would see in the world.

I was surprised and delighted by the level of awareness in the students about Malala. Whether conscious or unconscious, they are responding to her lead. Malala is bringing standing for something home to these high schoolers at a time when it is sorely needed in their thinking. This was apparent when I met with my first group of youths, all students from the Ferguson area.



### ***Ferguson Students***

The Ferguson students, three boys and six girls, are completely present.

I offer them the invitation, "What are you thinking? What is in your minds?"

The first girl to speak says, "I don't want my school to shut down." Several join in her protest which ranges from the practical "I don't want to make up days at the end of the year" to the broader concept of "I want an education".

When I ask why the school is shutting down, the students are quick to reply. "They" have decided to close the area schools when the grand jury ruling is announced. "They" are afraid. When I ask, the students can't really tell me who "they" are. The students do want me to know that they don't want the closing, furthermore "the teachers don't want it either, but nobody's doing anything to change it."

The plea for somebody to do something is growing. Their conscience is awakening.

"Who have you said this to? Who have you shared these ideas with?" I ask them.

"No one." "Nobody will listen." "There's nothing the teachers can do about it." Are the responses. I do not hear racial divide here, I hear generational angst. An eternal tension between past, present, and future masked by a fear of the unknown.

Communication is possibly the only cure for this distress. "You must tell them how you feel," I am encouraging that Malala spirit so alive in them. "You must tell them what you are telling me. How important education is to you, and why. They need to hear this from you and you need to hear yourself say it."

In this moment, they are listening. I have transformed what was seen as a gap into an open space for their voice to be heard. Unaccustomed to this level of acknowledgement, an element of helplessness surfaces. Established ideas - yes prejudices - that nothing they think matters, that someone older won't listen to them, are being tried and failing.

It is not that long ago since I was a teenager. I remember acutely how I felt then, and how I feel now, anytime I am learning to let go of dependencies and assert my own will to create. I salute the creator in every living being, that Spirit that desires wholeness. Several decades of life experience, carried forward in that attitude, is the affirmation I can afford them in this moment.

"Your voice must be heard." I am remembering how the entire student assembly seemed in sync as their peers sang the final song of the play, "One Voice". Its message is the same rally we hear from Betty and Martin and Malala. Then, now, the message is always the same, the Real Self is what matters.

Malala's slogan captures the thought succinctly, "One child, one teacher, one book, one pen can change the world."

The place I hold in these young people's lives in this moment is to be a calming focus for that change to happen in them.

"Write to the *Post Dispatch*. Send it to "Letters to the Editor". Tell them how you feel about school.

"Someone will hear you. Someone will read what you write, even if it is not published. You never know where your words will go. How many people they will touch. Who will hear them.

"Someone like me might read what you write."

I explain that I receive countless emails and what I learn of value from them, I readily pass on to others with the expectation of enriching their lives. It is a way of sharing wealth. I have often quoted people, read their emails at seminars and conferences.

I assure them, "Your voice *will* be heard."

A silence falls in that open space for a few moments, then I turn to those who have not spoken yet asking, "What is on your heart?"

The only caucasian in the group stands out like Schweitzer in Africa. His message of reverence for life is just now rising in her. She speaks poignantly about what happens when you are not loved as a child. This girl, born into material poverty, has learned lessons not unlike Malala's. She knows that when the pain, anger, and sorrow are gone, it is the love that remains and that beyond it all, love is what sees us through life.

Still, she wrestles with her fear of the strangers who have come in just to destroy parts of her hometown. She wonders what they gain from taking the little she and others have.

"This is about being poor. It doesn't know a race," she says. Hers is the discerning heart, seeking reconciliation. Mother Teresa's spirit comes through her voice when she says, "We need love; we have to give."

I understand completely why she is here today, in this group. When we embrace, I thank her for her generous spirit, and I am rewarded by the light now evident in her eyes.

## ***St. Mary's***

I am escorted to the chapel where five young men and their teacher are talking with Linda Pecaut, one of the organizers of today's event. I shake each one's hand, telling them my name and asking theirs.

"How has what happened in Ferguson affected you?" I leave the ground completely open.

At first they are distant, reticent to share their thoughts openly. There is a difference in this group, that has little to do with their racial makeup (four white and one black) and everything to do with religious thought. In fact when the conversation lags, Michael distractedly comments on holy water which has been placed prominently at the entry to the chapel. Looking for it, he is surprised he missed it. Then kibbitzing with a peer, he questions that water can be holy at all.



"Have you ever heard of a man named Emoto?" I ask.

"What?" Michael is surprised as much by my attention to his mental escapade as whatever words I've said.

"Masuru Emoto, was born in Japan, and died just a few weeks ago. He spent much of his life scientifically exploring the consciousness of water. There is no doubt that holy water is real."

I am meeting a considerable wall of doubt. Even so, I can see the others leaning in, their egos not on the line. Even Michael's is curious.

I back off, "You should check it out online. Google Emoto. He's published several books with photos of the effects of thoughts like "Love and Gratitude". You can see clearly the different forms water crystals take. And you'll see readily the difference between "love" and "I'll kill you".

"Yes," I assure them, "thoughts matter."

It is easy to tell that this group of students is sheltered from the mayhem experienced by the Ferguson students. Violence didn't come to their neighborhoods and it shows in their conservative manner, and somewhat intellectual view of what has happened.

I challenge them to lead. To step up and make a difference. I tell them about my son, Hezekiah. "We've had several conversations about the power of youth. Malala is an excellent example of it. Malala teaches us that living a life worth examining starts at any age. She is 17. How old are you? You will only be 16 or 17 or 18 for a year. Then your experience will enter a new phase of influence. Think



*from Scott  
Hilburn,  
Filmographer  
and future  
Narrator*

This has been a very profound experience in many ways. The kids seem to be very open and receptive.

During the Q&As with individual laureates, I got to observe the kids sharing the realness of what they are experiencing and how much it is affecting them. Dr. Barbara connected with the youth of St. Mary's High School. She was very elevated and connected with them. She painted a vision of how they each can make a difference in the world. She really reached deep inside of them and turned something on. I could see it in the youth energetically, even physically as each one of them waited in line to hug Dr. Barbara. I love the universal Law of Relativity. I am eager to see it unfold in the present, weeks, months, years and lifetime ahead. •



about what you can do now. How you can use your life now, at this age. What is the best that you are capable of, right now?"

As if on cue, Hezekiah walks into the chapel. I introduce him to the young gentlemen and invite him to join us.

Jacob is the last to talk. I have watched him want to talk several times like wanting to enter a revolving door and pulling back from each opportunity. His introversion shows itself in the acne on his face. "My mom's a dispatcher and she's gone every night since the shooting." His eyes are furtive, his lips trying not to quiver.

"You're worried about her," I support him while leaving a door open if he wants to say more.

"She's a single mom. She leaves at 3 in the afternoon and doesn't get back until 11, so I never see her now." Ferguson has enforced an unwanted separation between Jacob and his mother.

"Must be really difficult," I say softly. Jacob is walking that tightrope between the emotions that arise with honest disclosure and human pride that struggles to save face with his peers. Jacob's distress doesn't come from a racial bias, it's a gender one. This prejudice makes people unholy, less than whole.

In between the pain, and the fear, a ray of loving pride enters when he adds, "I have a younger sister, I take care of her."

"Please tell your mother thank you for the work she is doing," I tell him gently. "We are grateful for her service and for the sacrifice you now feel. You and your mom are now in my prayers."

## *In The Library*

Rachael is shaping herself in her own image. She is a God in the making. One of five students invited to talk with all of us before lunch, Rachael grabbed a camera and filmed in the early hours following Michael Brown's death. Well-spoken, she laments the thinking that believes stealing is in some way retribution for killing.

She fancies herself becoming a media filmographer. And she is on her way.

Smart, articulate, practiced, and determined, she holds the platform for more minutes than the other four seniors combined.

"Only 175 days to go!" Emani says. (Remember that consciousness? I do.) The young blacks are all well spoken, including Michael Brown's cousin, Eric. Even so, it is Rachael who has the most to say.

After an hour of listening, the students are empty and they ask the School of Metaphysics people speak - Brian Kraichely from Palatine, IL brings kindness, Terrence Bellows from Louisville, KY brings empathy, Damian Nordmann from Dallas, gratitude; Diana Kenney from St. Louis, challenge; Brenton Harris from Columbia, MO, humility; Leah Morris from Kansas City, mindfulness; Roberto Czars from Bolingbrook, IL, forgiveness; Rashard Garrett from Ft. Worth, tolerance; Laurel Clark, entrainment. Each brings a new thread into the tapestry being woven before our eyes.

By 2:30, the meeting needs resolution. I feel it in my body, my energy is waning. Rachael again commands the floor, lamenting the difficulty she feels in reaching blacks who do not attend private school. 'It's hard work when kids at public schools don't know our history better, and don't seem to care.' We have achieved another level of prejudice that has nothing to do with race. This bias is about privilege,—the responsibility of entitlement. She has opened a door for me to enter.

"You must tell them because you know, Rachael. Don't turn your back on them. You *must* do that work." I share with her the last words I said to the cast this morning: 'Remember you are MAKING history. Not just telling it.' This is true for you when you film your stories of what is happening."

Agreeing with her, I add, "It *is* hard work. And you are the one to do it. You are already doing it." I address the inner urge I see in her, that is so obvious even in the way she moves.

I also note that in all she has said, her most repeated word is "selfish". She smiles and we both know she is aware of the programming she is about. I speak of the Real Self. We connect. I affirm her closely when I venture to say, "The conflict is in each of us. Will we do the work or not? It's the new Civil War - this war is not outside, it's inside."

The point is made and received. I turn the attention to SOM people and their "hard work." I want this group of well-educated youth, who have experienced the recent events in St. Louis, to know a bit more about the incredible audience that has received them. I explain how giving THE INVITATION was set up last spring, and everyone is here because they want to be, not because they are paid to be. When I tell the seniors these teachers volunteer their time to



teach adults metaphysics, Rachael's head spins. She is flabbergasted, sputtering, "They aren't paid? Why? How do you live?" The questions flow.

They realize they have been in the company of exceptional minds who are living lives worth examining. We were not what they may have taken us to be at all. Another prejudice, whatever it might be, dissolved through communication.

The biggest impact we make is often in how we listen, not what we say. In our actions, not our words.

Of all the students I met at Cardinal Ritter, one impressed herself on my heart like the fragrance of her namesake, Jasmine. Quick with a smile and friendly greeting, she was steadfastly at our sides, serving the needs of the cast and crew, the entire time we were at her school. A senior, when you ask Jasmine what she wants to do in life, she quickly says, "I want to be head nurse at the local children's hospital."

On Tuesday, the clash of values deafening the heart's ability to hear is alive in Jasmine as she struggles to make sense of it all. Jasmine is from Ferguson. She spoke of how her life changed immediately after the day of the shooting. Checkpoints for identification were set up almost every block in her neighborhood where days before she had walked freely.



*Jasmine and Jason, CR students who assisted us with THE INVITATION from start to finish*

Jasmine's dad is a veteran. He told her what happened in Ferguson was worse than anything he had seen when he was in Iraq. Her mother has a bag packed in case they need to flee the area if violence erupts when the grand jury ruling is announced.

Before August 9th, she was secure and loved. Now, she is still loved, but her security has been shaken. "There's fear there, where it wasn't there before."

The events have brought a level of anxiety into Jasmine's life. Maybe it's preparing her for future countless parents she will counsel in medical situations where the outcome is uncertain. Maybe she, like Malala, will use this situation to grow as a person, a friend, a better human being.

I feel confident in that because when I think of Jasmine, although the thoughts she shared in the library were influential, they are not the way I remember her. What I carry with me, what she impressed upon my heart, are Jasmine's last words as she hugged me goodnight:

"I want to play Mother Teresa!"



