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Collaborative in Conflict Transformation

Annual Report 2024

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This report was compiled in January 2025 by CT Collaborative staff, in consultation with the CT Pillar Heads and the Grants and Sponsored Programs office. The narrative below focuses on July-December 2024. Information on earlier programs can be found in the twice-yearly reports posted on our website. Please send questions to conflicttransformation@middlebury.edu.

INTRODUCTION

These first three years of the Conflict Transformation (CT) Collaborative have been a time to build a strong foundation of programs, people, and partners that collectively inform Middlebury's approach to conflict transformation. This foundation helps us practice and model the sorts of approaches to constructive conflict that we hope to foster in ourselves, our students, our partners, and our organizations and communities. We cannot ask others to do things that we ourselves are not willing to do.

We have a clear statement – for ourselves, our students, and our partners – of our three learning goals and our priority list of knowledge, skills, and dispositions (KSDs). These are focal points as we design programs for diverse audiences. As advisory board member Susan Clark has taught us, we are *navigating polarities* of decentralization (valuable for allowing autonomy and the design of bespoke programming) and standardization (valuable for coherence and coordination among diverse units).

Across the Collaborative's work, our three core learning goals are to foster: (1) a new understanding of conflict; (2) skills to understand self and others; and (3) a commitment to act. Middlebury's particular approach to conflict transformation foregrounds the following:

- *Knowledge*: Good conflict intervention first starts with good conflict analysis – who are the actors, their dynamics, histories, and values? Next, we develop critical self-awareness. People have different conflict styles, personality traits, histories, strengths, and challenges.
- *Skills*: we focus on four approaches. Structured dialogue encourages participants to listen to understand. Intercultural communication engages across different frames of references and values. Mediation identifies the interests behind conflicting positions to support problem-solving. Restorative practices encourage accountability for harm while repairing relationships.
- *Dispositions*: Lederach (2005) identifies four dispositions essential for this work: curiosity, creativity, risk-taking, and a relational focus.

These tools for constructive engagement with conflict are never mastered; rather, like muscles, they get stronger with regular use and atrophy if we fail to practice. At a global liberal arts institution committed to understanding the world through multiple perspectives, we have developed many paths into CT for our varied students and partners.

Our ambitious goal is to develop and share a flexible CT model. Through collaborative partnerships where we exchange ideas while honoring diverse interests and backgrounds, we have learned about many approaches to constructive conflict that have informed our model. Several of our partners working in experiential learning and global study abroad have incorporated CT into the work that they do with all of their students — see descriptions of SHECP, diiVe, and EUSA below. We are in ongoing dialogue with national groups like the Institute for Citizens and Scholars and Braver Angels to devise ways to advance civic skills and build bridges in a highly polarized national environment.

We are planning already for the continuation of this work beyond the grant's end in 2028. We have encouraging evidence that the opportunity to lean into the practices of CT has shifted the way that participating faculty and staff understand their goals as educators and the skills they can develop to foster perspective taking, active listening, critical self-awareness, careful analysis, and a commitment to action.

The CT lens can shift how we view our relationships and institutions and the fundamental nature and value of conflict. We are fortunate to have substantial time and resources to invest in understanding and employing that transformational lens.

LAYING THE FOUNDATION FOR CT IN K-12 SCHOOLS

In Summer 2024, BLSE offered three Change courses at the Vermont campus for 27 students. The summer study ended with a dinner and presentation session for the Change courses (plus the BLSE dean and director, and the head of the Conflict Transformation Collaborative) and a jubilant sharing of work.

We ran several additional workshops for the Vermont BLSE community. We began the summer session with a workshop focused on how belonging is invited – and thwarted – in diverse communities, at BLSE and beyond. The event was headed by Change Curriculum coordinator Michelle Robinson and co-run by an outside facilitator Sheila Carter-Tod. Roughly 100 members of the BLSE community (including students, faculty, and staff) participated in one or more of the sessions.

The value and impact of the workshop was evident in the first week, when an off-campus incident targeted one of our students of color and challenged his, and the community's, sense of belonging. As various members of the community at all three BLSE campuses responded, workshop participants used strategies and vocabularies gleaned from the workshop to navigate the conflicts that came with charting a communal way forward. In the process, we developed a sustainable model for addressing disruptive moments collectively, within and beyond a diverse academic community. In addition, our Change Curriculum coordinator ran two workshops for BLSE faculty (~15 participants each) centered on classroom practices and cultures that take account of the differences students face.

Expanding CT in the Bread Loaf Teacher Network

Across Year 3 of the grant, the Bread Loaf Teacher Network Next Generation Leadership Network (BLTN NextGen) added to its strength and impact by building up the ties between the nine sites that now define it. With funding from the grant, BLTN has been able to extend the reach of “What’s the Story? The Young Filmmakers’ Social Action Team” (WTS), originally the cornerstone of the Vermont cohort only. Via special grant-funded fellowships and stipends, BLTN recruited WTS teacher/mentors from Vermont and from four other NextGen hubs and affiliate sites (Aiken, SC; Chelsea, MA; Santa Fe Indian School, NM; Louisville, KY) along with new groups from Washington, DC, Gastonia, NC, and Lewiston, ME. These mentors are bringing WTS’s documentary filmmaking practices to their own BLTN NextGen and BLTN teams. As a result, WTS cohorts are now in place across the Network, catalyzing the social action of youth from multiple sites.

BLTN NextGen also had two major cross-site meetings, one hosted by BLSE and one hosted by the NextGen Louisville team. In July, BLTN NextGen met for an annual retreat at the BLSE Vermont campus. This meeting was combined with an annual WTS FilmFest, with 29 youth and 17 adult mentors from nine NextGen sites (in VT, MA, SC, GA, KY, NM, PA, VA, and the Navajo Nation) attending, as well as a cohort from Washington DC. The youth presented their own compelling social advocacy / documentary films to a BLSE audience of roughly 100 students, faculty, staff, and local community members. An estimated 30 Middlebury students, staff, and faculty participated in the event. Through cooperative activities, presentations, panel discussions, outdoor activities, as well as via the FilmFest, the youth worked in the spirit of Middlebury’s Conflict Transformation Initiative, learning and collaborating across social, cultural, and individual differences. As an extra, they had an opportunity to tour Middlebury College and talk to an admissions officer: at least one applied to Middlebury.

In November, BLTN NextGen Louisville invited peers from across the Network to learn about their city and schools and to explore ways of making schools and communities more just and equitable. Youth from three Louisville high schools (Atherton, Fern Creek, and Jeffersontown) plus BLTN NextGen peers from SC, NM, and the Navajo Nation were in attendance – with participants totaling 25 youth and 12 adult

mentors. Participants visited the Muhammad Ali Center, the Louisville Zoo, the Speed Art Museum, the Churchill Downs Museum, and the Louisville Slugger Museum and Factory.

“After having the good fortune of visiting other NextGen sites and learning of their cultures, it was an honor to host a gathering in Louisville to share with those who have been so welcoming to us. It is always amazing to watch students from different regions and backgrounds find that they have so much in common! Their commitment to create positive change bridges states, cultures, and generations.”

-- Heather Jones, the site mentor for BLTN NextGen Louisville

Change Action Grants

In Fall 2024, BLTN awarded Change Action Grants (in a second round this year) to present and past Change Fellows and to other active BLTN members, to support their work in 2024-25 on community projects focused on conflict-based systems and situations. Nine recipients, from schools and communities in six different states and two international sites (El Salvador and Singapore), received these awards.

These projects included the development and implementation of an arts day welcoming newly arrived immigrant youth to Maine, a series of culturally focused writing workshops, an oral history podcast documenting Louisville’s multicultural past, an anthology written by Lawrence youth, mentors, and community leaders on their efforts to promote educational equity locally, and an advisory council to improve the Burlington, Vermont school district’s support of multilingual students and their families. Overall, we estimate that these projects have had or will have an impact on roughly 5,385 students, teachers, and community members. 26 Middlebury students, faculty, and staff were directly involved in these projects.

CT Fellowships

We awarded twelve Change Fellowships to support the summer study at BLSE of teachers who took one of our Change courses and developed BLTN projects related to that work. We also created an additional two “What’s the Story?” Fellowships, to support the summer study of BLTN NextGen teacher/mentors from any of the Network hubs, to prepare them as WTS mentors for BLTN NextGen. For 2025, we plan to offer special Global Change fellowships for California educators who will attend the BLSE Summer Institute in Global Humanities (housed at MIIS), take a course in global questions and literatures, and work with BLTN peers to design and implement globally oriented classroom and community projects that involve navigation of differences.

CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION IN UNDERGRADUATE LIFE

This July, we navigated our first Pillar Head transition from political science professor Sebnem Gumuscu to dance professor Lida Winfield. Lida and Sebnem worked closely together (including co-leading the Engaged Listening Program (ELP) in Fall 2023), modeling interdisciplinary collaboration and enabling a smooth handoff. Lida has worked extensively with CT, serving as an ELP facilitator since 2021, and she integrates constructive conflict skills and creativity into her work with students and colleagues.

Our student-facing work has focused on restorative practices, classroom support in partnership with Beyond the Page, and new courses and the launch of a new CT Academic Cluster. This substantial effort has yielded a proactive approach to community-building and a relational focus.

Restorative Practices (RP)

We began the fall semester with RP trainings to help equip students with RP skills to better support each other in navigating low-level conflicts and to foster a sense of community. With a foundation of mutual understanding, students are better prepared to address challenges when conflicts arise. In August, we led a three-day training for 90 Res Life student-staff and 5 Residential professional staff, focused on community building RP circles and responding to low-level community harms. These Res Life trainings continued throughout the semester. We also trained 125 orientation leaders in community building circles. At Orientation, we again facilitated *Unlearning at Midd* workshops for almost 50 first-years with a focus on unlearning shame, why it happens, and how to disrupt it. Finally, we have responded to requests from specific student groups, supporting restorative work with dorms, Posse students, and JusTalks.

CT Courses and Academic Cluster

This fall, we formally launched a new “Conflict Transformation Academic Cluster.” The cluster provides a flexible, optional way for students to build knowledge and skills for conflict analysis and engagement, and to link courses with experiential learning. Students take courses in conflict analysis and conflict skills, and to participate in a CT-connected experiential learning program.

New courses in conflict analysis and skills are opportunities for deep learning that feed into the cluster. In Fall 2024, the “conflict transformation skills” course (INTD 232) had 22 students. Looking ahead, we have another CT Skills course and an intensive course in Restorative Justice with sujatha baliga (INTD 1018) in Winter 2025. In Spring 2025, we will again offer SOCI 228 (Theories and Fundamentals of Conflict Transformation) and EDST 132 (Mindfulness and Conflict Transformation). As of September, 18 students had completed four out of five cluster requirements already. 14 students have formally enrolled in the cluster, and at least two will complete the cluster in February 2025.

Beyond the Page (BtP)

To help faculty foster new classroom conversations, BtP focused on building skills such as nurturing curiosity and creativity, developing critical self-awareness and reflection, collaboration across differences, and fostering relationship-building. Our BtP undergraduate fellows have focused on facilitation practices and using teaching artistry to cultivate CT dispositions. In addition, we hosted several community events that engaged approximately 230 participants total. On *Dia de los Muertos*, BtP Fellows performed at a campus-wide event, contributing to the celebration and reflection of this important cultural tradition. In September, *The Stranger's Case* project explored themes of migration and home. The project included multiple workshops held at Middlebury's Town Hall Theater, which invited a diverse set of community members to a collaborative theatre-making process.

Professional Development

This summer, we revised and expanded our main professional development program, the *Engaged Listening Project* (ELP). ELP now focuses on both structured dialogue and restorative practices. Building on our past partnership with Essential Partners, for whom we are deeply grateful, we now have the internal leadership to facilitate the two-day opening workshop. The ELP team restructured the curriculum towards a fuller range of CT skills, still grounded in dialogue but now incorporating restorative practices and an increased focus on critical self-awareness, communication, and community building.

The Fall 2024 ELP cohort consisted of 18 faculty and staff, representing French, Global Health, History, Architectural Studies, Biology, Chemistry and Biochemistry, Religion, Japanese, English, Chinese, Dance, Black Studies, and the First Year Seminar as well as offices such as the Center for Teaching, Learning, and Research, Student Affairs, Language Schools, and Climate Action. In October we received a record number of ELP applications (39) and selected 23 fellows for the Spring 2025 cohort.

In the long term, we plan to expand the ELP training to include mediation skills. By integrating structured dialogue, restorative practices, and mediation into a cohesive three-tiered approach, we aim to provide faculty and staff with a robust set of skills. These tools will empower them to navigate a wide variety of situations with students effectively and constructively.

Highlights from participants:

- “This ELP session exceeded all my expectations. I don’t know what I thought it would be like, maybe more generic training, but that was not. It challenged me, encouraged me, supported me and, just as importantly, taught me immensely. The most important part, in addition to providing a community of like-minded people and educators, was the blending of community and content-building methodologies it explored. I came out learning something new out of every session and took those approaches into the classroom and my everyday life.”
- “I really wish this was something that all members of Middlebury would take part in with the full intent to be open to learning new ways of doing things and approaching group interactions.”

Other Professional Development

Beyond the ELP, we have expanded professional development in two other ways. First, 18 faculty and staff participated in a 32-hour summer mediation training led by Susanne Terry and her coaches. The training equipped participants with essential skills such as active listening, asking thoughtful questions, shifting from positions to deeper interests, and maintaining curiosity. These will support students and colleagues navigating conflict across the college and contribute to a growing community of practice.

Second, we have used restorative approaches to respond to the needs of faculty and staff. At the request of the Vice President of Equity and Inclusion, we facilitated two RP circles for current Posse Mentors and will offer more regular RP workshops for Posse Mentors. Before the fall election, we held an RP circle open to all faculty and staff, and we host bi-weekly RP circles for faculty and staff. In the spring, we will invite past ELP participants to join these RP circles.

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

We support a variety of experiential learning opportunities, internship programs, and peacebuilding projects. The educators involved in developing these programs meet quarterly to connect program-specific learning outcomes with Collaborative-wide learning goals and develop assessment processes.

Year Round Community Engagement Opportunities

There are seven major programs in which we integrate CT and community engagement.

- The *Privilege & Poverty (P&P) Academic Cluster* critically examine the causes and consequences of economic inequality. Through two half-credit courses and a summer experience with SHCECP (see below), students get hands-on experiences in law, immigration, health, food and nutrition, and housing, navigating conflict at multiple scales and utilizing CT skills.
- Six student-led *Middlebury College Alternative Break Programs (MAlt)* in February 2024 had 73 student participants. MAlt engages Middlebury students with communities across the Americas to share an experience, provide service where needed, and learn about the systems that shape community realities. A half-credit course guides students through logistics and design.
- Three undergraduates joined the *Middlebury Social Impact Corps (MSIC)* program this summer in Monterey, California, working with the Blue Zones Project. Students completed a literature review, developed a social media campaign, and created a bilingual parks toolkit for new parents.
- We supported a *Projects for Peace* summer project for a Middlebury student. This Innovation Hub-affiliated student sought to build peace in the Mandera, the most insecure and underdeveloped region in Kenya.
- *Service Translation* is an international translation collaborative between International Christian University students (Japan) and Middlebury to capture the experiences of Japanese Americans who suffered mass incarceration during World War II. The 2024 project was the subtitling (English to Japanese) of *Removed by Force*, a documentary on Japanese Americans in Hawai'i.
- Through the *National Torchbearers* program, three Middlebury student fellows attended their spring conference in Los Angeles and a follow-up convening in the fall. The national convening brings together young adults to consider the American Dream in today's polarized context.
- Three additional special projects supported students working on migrant and refugee justice; attendance at the *Sustained Dialogue Institute's Campus Network Summer Leaders' Summit*; and a fall internship with *Vermont Restorative Approaches Collaborative (VTRAC)*.

Convening on Conflict Transformation and Community Engagement

We organized three events for all students participating in summer 2024 CT-funded experiential learning programs. The first gathering in late spring focused on interpersonal conflict styles using the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI). The second gathering featured a recorded lecture, "Conflict Engagement and Peace Building in a World of Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity," by Dr. Vanessa Andreotti (University of Victoria). Students then met in cohorts or with Dr. Andreotti to consider strategies for addressing conflict from a systems perspective. Finally, our third gathering was a post-program dinner and discussion for students to reflect on their summer learning and how it might inform further action and learning. The event included a recorded address from the 2024 Projects for Peace Alumni Award winner (see below).

Projects for Peace Alumni Award and Convenings

The Projects for Peace Alumni Award Committee selected Bienfait Hahozi Mugenza, a member of the 2018 cohort of Projects for Peace grantees from the University of Rochester. In eastern Congo, Mugenza

has dedicated his career to conflict transformation, human rights, and catalyzing “peace entrepreneurs” as an alternative to profiteering from war and violence. At the Congo Peace Academy (which Mugenza founded as an undergraduate), the award funds will support the development of the Tech4Peace program.

In November, the Projects for Peace program held its inaugural convening for campus liaisons. Representatives from 28 institutions traveled to Princeton University for a gathering focused on “Student-Community-Campus.” The next convening is scheduled for June 2025 at the Middlebury Institute for International Studies in Monterey, California. As one participant reflected:

- “I truly enjoyed the convening and found it to be both useful and engaging—a rare combination. In practice, this means I gained valuable insights not only into the process and its administrative or management aspects but also into the conceptual ideas surrounding Peace.”

Shepherd Higher Education Consortium on Poverty (SHECP) Partnership

A longstanding partner, SHECP introduced a CT workshop to select cohorts in 2023, developed by Dr. Katy Gray Brown (Manchester University). In 2024, the workshop was revised and expanded to all incoming interns (59 students from 16 institutions). We also supported three students in SHECP’s Policy & Nonprofit Leadership Internship, an additional opportunity for SHECP alums to obtain a greater understanding of the dynamics of organizational leadership and the creation of successful anti-poverty policies. They worked at the National Community Action Foundation, the United Planning Organization, and the Brookings Institution.

Annual Break Program

We supported two collaborative break programs: a Spring break DC Trek for ten students, and our third History in Translation summer program with fourteen undergraduate and high school students.

- *Global Affairs, Conflict Transformation & Mentoring Trek*: The 2024 DC Career Acceleration Trek, was an immersive, fully-funded experience that exposed 10 Rohatyn Global Scholars and Fellows to careers in global affairs. The trek included visits to multiple organizations, interaction with alumni, and mentorship from MIIS graduate students.
- *History in Translation 2024*: Each summer, the History in Translation (HT) program brings together a purposefully intercultural cohort to explore an historical experience or event in service of an equitable and inclusive future. The 2024 History in Translation (HT24) program was a post-secondary mentoring program for refugee/immigrant youth and multilingual learners of English. Several HT22 participants also traveled to Aotearoa (New Zealand) this fall – to deepen the exchange of language reclamation strategy and indigenous allyship.

Internships in Conflict Transformation

We supported 31 domestic and international internships in 2024.

- Fourteen students interned this summer with diiVe, working with private- and public-sector clients. diiVe has implemented a CT curriculum for all 120 of their interns, focusing on how conflict can create positive change and building skills to embrace that potential. In Winter, two students had helped developed the CT curriculum for diiVe.
- Seven students interned this summer in eastern Uganda with Team4Tech, a Silicon Valley-based nonprofit that helps education-focused NGOs in the developing world. Team4Tech incorporated CT curriculum into its two-week pre-departure training for interns.
- Other interns worked with Emma’s Torch (supporting refugees and trafficking victims); the New York Supreme Court, the Istanbul Policy Center, the Center for Nonproliferation Studies, Middlebury’s DEI office, and a Chilean community mental health group.

GRADUATE TRAINING AND RESEARCH

Fellowship Program

We have four core streams in our graduate fellowship program, described below. We also have supported several fellowships at the Language Schools and the School in France.

- *Cohort Fellows*: the 40 cohort fellows in 2024-25 meet monthly to learn about core CT principles and frameworks through engagement with guest speakers, readings, discussions, and peer-to-peer learning. They completed detailed project planning documents shared with peers, Mentor Fellows, and Pillar Head Netta Avineri. The CT Fellows' bios and CT projects can be found [here](#).
- *Mentor Fellows*: these eight fellows (members of previous CT cohorts) meet regularly with individual Fellows and in cohorts, and create and collect key resources for the Fellows. We created a Handbook for the Fellows and shared CT-related resources relevant for their projects.
- *Pedagogy Fellows*: Three fellows focus on resource development and curricular mapping for CT.
- *Graduate Assistant (GA) Fellows*: three GA Fellows worked with Prof. Marie Butcher on a multilingual anthology on peace and conflict transformation titled "Doves Born of Flames."

Annual Seminar and Events

The Graduate Annual seminar is held in May; this year, we had over 75 participants (see July report). In 2025, the seminar will be held on Friday, May 2. We supplement this annual gathering with programming through the academic year to engage graduate students, faculty, community members, and community partners in rich CT-related discussions.

In Fall 2024, we sponsored or cosponsored: (a) a faculty conversation with Prof. Marie Harder on shared values crystallization methodologies for community-engaged research; (b) Ava Homa's visit and talk, focused on fiction and conflict; (c) a presentation from Sophia Poteet & Nomsa Ndogwe on their CT research grant-funded project on gender and multilateral disarmament; (d) a presentation on environmental mediation from Matt Strassberg; (e) a talk from Ora and Ihab Balha on the Orchard of Abraham's Children and their inspiring approach to peacebuilding; (f) a three day Mini-Monterey Model on "Bridging Words: Language as a Tool for Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding" ([report & photos here](#)); (g) a lunch talk by Prof. Sharad Joshi on [pedagogical approaches to global conflict](#); (h) a presentation from Michael Yoshii and Adam Manasra on *Multifaith Partnerships in Times of Conflict* with stories of a Palestine-California collaboration.

Community Engagement Opportunities and Projects

Our experiential learning efforts have focused on preparing for three experiential learning trips in 2025. To expand the capacity of faculty to lead these CT-connected efforts, Carolyn Meyer (director of experiential learning at MIIS) and Netta Avineri co-facilitated an October session with Global Courses faculty about CT approaches in their courses, intercultural competence (ICC), and experiential learning.

- *Nuclear Research Reactor Practicum (Czech Republic and Austria)*: this January 2025 trip offers a hands-on experience with research reactors and laboratories at the Czech Technical University (CTU) in Prague followed by two days in Vienna with staff at the IAEA and CTBTO.
- *UN Sustainable Development Goals in Action (Costa Rica)*: this course (January 8-19) is in partnership with the University for Peace Executive Education Center (UPEACE). The course will address peace & security, sustainability and climate change, language and intercultural communication, as well as specific UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), observing and visiting with organizations and practitioners.

- *Nationalism and the Formation of New States (Serbia, Kosovo, North Macedonia)*: this March 2025 course will explore Kosovo and North Macedonia, which have two majority populations: one Slavic and one Albanian. Students will explore the roles of policy, education, language, and culture to unpack some of the drivers of tensions within each country. Opportunities for primary research by students and site visits throughout several Balkans states will be overseen by faculty.

We have supported two other efforts. Participants in UNICEF internships develop a deeper understanding of international diplomacy and the global education ecosystem while building relationships with key actors. We also continue our work with Middlebury Social Impact Corps, which brings together graduate and undergraduate students (see above). In 2025, we have confirmed that we will again partner with Big Sur Land Trust, focused on conflicts over land access and use in the Monterey Bay region.

Critical Issues Forum

Since July, the Critical Issues Forum (CIF) has focused on four core activities: participation in the Bread Loaf Teachers Network/Next Generation Conference; CIF high school outreach activities; Speaker Series events; and preparation for the Spring 2025 Students Conference in Monterey. CIF has also redesigned its [project website](#) and expanded its social media presence to a fifth platform, [LinkedIn](#).

BLTN/NextGen Conference (Middlebury): As part of CIF's collaboration with BLTN, CIF Project Manager Masako Toki participated in the Bread Loaf Teachers Network/Next Generation Conference July 11-13 in Middlebury, VT. Masako presented an overview of CIF and a basic lecture on nuclear disarmament. CIF has been engaging with several BLTN high schools: Middlebury; Jefferson County, Kentucky; Aiken High School (South Carolina); and Julia Masterman High School (Pennsylvania).

High School Outreach Activities: At the start of the 2024-2025 academic year, Masako visited Carmel High School and Monterey High School. She was also a keynote speaker at the Winnipeg Youth Nuclear Peace Summit in November, with over 100 attendees. In December, Masako visited two high schools in Hiroshima, including a new school with strong potential to join CIF, and she also met with the Chairperson of the Hiroshima Peace and Cultural Foundation to discuss further collaboration in disarmament education. In Tokyo, Masako visited youth organizations promoting disarmament education and reunited with an atomic bomb survivor who is the Assistant Secretary General of Nihon Hidankyo.

Speaker Series: The series is also open to anyone interested in international peace, security, and youth education, and we actively engage young generations. In 2024, CIF hosted three Speaker Series events:

- *Decolonizing Nuclear Studies* with Anne Harrington (Cardiff University) and Shampa Biswas (Whitman College) in March ([full description here](#)).
- *Strengthening Peace and Security Initiatives Through Cross-cultural Youth Engagement* with Salma Malik (Quaid-i-Azam University) in September. Malik's extensive international teaching experience provided valuable insights for high school students ([full description here](#)).
- *Paper Lanterns Film Screening and Panel Discussion*: The film highlights Shigeaki Mori, a Hiroshima atomic bomb survivor who dedicated his life to advocating for reconciliation between former enemies by sharing the stories of American POWs killed in the bombing. A November screening and panel A panel discussion featured Ms. Nobuko Saito Cleary, the film producer, and Dr. William Potter, Director of CNS, moderated by Jean du Preez ([full report here](#)).

The theme for the CIF 2025 Conference has been set as "80 Years of Struggles: Revitalizing Nuclear Disarmament and Nonproliferation Through Cross-Cultural Youth Engagement." 2025 marks the 80th anniversary of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings. Information sessions and logistical planning this fall will support a successful conference.

GLOBAL LITERACY AND CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION

The Middlebury-C.V. Starr Schools Abroad continue to develop CT programming in countries around the world. Projects this fall have included in-house CT Courses, research assistantships and partnerships with local students, cross-cultural internship orientations, and internships addressing conflict directly.

As we begin our fourth year, our first goal is to continue centering the Collaborative's learning goals in all CT programming. We are encouraged by the concrete connections faculty and students are making between their projects and CT theory. The everyday conflicts of intercultural communication as students learn, socialize, and intern in new cultures and languages can be approached with a growth mindset using the CT framework. Our second goal is thus to broaden the understanding of conflict from macro conflicts to interpersonal conflicts as conduits for growth, connection, and resilience in our students abroad.

School in Jordan

A Middlebury School in Jordan alumnus interned with Squash Dreamers (SD), a nonprofit that provides refugee and underprivileged girls in Amman with professional squash training and academic support. In addition to tutoring, academic support, and training, the students engaged in simulation-based activities focused on CT. The student met weekly with the School director to reflect and connect to the CT lens.

School in Spain

Summer Internship: An intern with deep experience in CT at the College spent eight weeks at Sede, sharing the CT framework with SiS faculty and staff. A report offered specific ideas for enhancing the CT experience: orientation workshops, structured dialogues, CT connected courses and excursions, and integration into Academic Friday programming. This report will serve as a lasting resource for the Schools.

Historical Memory Projects: as part of Fall 2024 orientation, students chose one of two activities. "*Stolpersteine: aquí vivió*" invited students to learn about the Spaniards deported to Nazi concentration camps following the Spanish Civil War. Students listened to the testimony of several individuals affected, visited a nearby Stolpersteine, and discussed public memorials. "*Madrid Negro*" offered a guided tour through Madrid focused on enslaved people and stories of self-liberation in the 18th century. Students learned about this history, and reflected in small groups on the restorative nature of history reclamation.

School in Argentina

In a culture and writing course, students build language skills while exploring cultural and sociopolitical conflicts through the CT framework. Students engage with Argentine and Río de la Plata culture, examining the historical, aesthetic, and sociological dimensions of conflicts from memory reclamation to gender and social movements. Via excursions and regular discussions, students are preparing to engage with cross-cultural conflicts and critically examine other socio-cultural conflicts.

School in Uruguay

Students visited the non-profit organization Redalco several times in their Writing and Culture Course. Redalco addresses unequal food distribution in Montevideo. Students helped recover crops and visited the Central Food Market, directly observing local social tensions. Students reflected on consumer culture, food waste, and asymmetrical distribution, and joined a School in Argentina trip to Neuquen, Patagonia.

School in Chile

Intercultural Academic Pairs Project: six students, including 4 from the Universidad de la Frontera), conducted a research project on socio-ecological conflicts at the Ramsar site in Monkul, in the Araucanía Region of Chile. Looking at the Mapuche community *Mateo Nahuelpan*, their research report investigated the value of biocultural memory related to wetlands, and proposed strategies for transforming land management conflicts. Individual and group reflections connected theory with practice and fostered an interdisciplinary and intercultural understanding of socio-ecological conflicts.

Fall 2023 Roundtable (not reported in 2023): at the Universidad Alberto Hurtado's Faculty of Law. a roundtable, "Transforming Conflicts as an Opportunity for Social Change," introduced CT concepts and strengthened partnerships with practitioners. Juan Pastene, Director of the School in Chile, was joined by three practitioners: Sebastián Vega Aguayo, Director of the Metropolitan Foundation for Overcoming Poverty; Rosa María Olave, Director of the UAH Mediation and Conflict Resolution Program, and Mario Orellana, Director of the Schools of Social Leaders.

Middlebury in Kazakhstan

In fall 2024, the Middlebury Russian Program in Kazakhstan had its first CT project led by Professor Caress Schenk (Nazarbayev University). Two students participated alongside two Kazakhstani post-graduate research assistants and six local students. The primary goal was to explore the social diversity that stands in opposition to official and traditional rhetoric that insists on flattened categories of ethnicity, language repertoire, and gender identity. Students' research identified and outlined potential paths for transforming conflict related to gender norms and domestic violence in Kazakhstani society.

Middlebury in Taiwan

Orientation Session: During orientation, the school hosted a session led by a current Middlebury in Taiwan student who is a talented alum of the CT Skills course at the Vermont campus. They shared insights from their past study of CT and guided an informal discussion on the role of transformative approaches to conflict in intercultural education and the general study abroad setting.

CT Retreat: In November, the Middlebury in Taiwan program hosted a one-day retreat focused on cross-cultural conflicts between Chinese and Western cultural norms. Through guided meditation, emotional observation, and a closing sharing circle, students developed self-awareness and empathy, exploring how internal responses shape their approaches to conflicts. Students' final reflective works were shared with the academic community and local partners to encourage ongoing engagement with CT.

School in Cameroon

In a class entitled "Intercultural Theories and Practice," students learned theories of intercultural communication (ICC), practiced through group excursions, and reflected on their experiences. The cultural adjustment W curve is a concept that can help students frame shifting cultural understandings and interactions with their host community. Students became more aware of the inter and intrapersonal conflicts that arise in new cultural environments and then developed strategies for negotiating respectful and meaningful cultural integration.

Middlebury-CMRS Oxford

Lord John Alderdice's October lecture, "How to Transform a Conflict," drew on the speaker's wide-ranging diplomatic experience, notably his role as a key negotiator in the Good Friday Agreement of 1998 in Northern Ireland. This is the third time that Lord Alderdice has spoken to students in the M-CMRS program and was accompanied by pre-readings. M-CMRS incorporated this fall's activity into their own budget; a positive sign as Schools begin to integrate CT programming.

School in France

EUSA Internships: EUSA is an educational organization that works with the School in France to place and guide students through faculty-led, intercultural, and linguistically immersive internship programs in Paris. Middlebury worked with EUSA to integrate CT into their curriculum. Students learned basic concepts in a CT-informed EUSA orientation, applied the CT framework to workplace conflicts, reflected weekly on their engagement with conflict, and planned for future CT development in a final report.

2024 Director's Conference

During the Summer 2024 Director's Conference in Vermont, all Schools Abroad Directors attended a three hour training session led by a recent graduate. This session provided an overview of CT at Middlebury, the role of inter/intrapersonal conflict in the study abroad experience, and successful international CT projects to date. Group activities highlighted the conflicts inherent to immersive cross-cultural education, and directors were offered a theoretical framework for applying CT to three broad areas of conflict navigating cultural immersion, committing to language learning, and examining conflicts in different contexts. The directors noted that since 2022, CT funding has enhanced student experiences by expanding academic offerings and enriching existing courses through CT approaches and excursions.

School of the Environment

Student Scholarships: Nine students received the Award for Environmental Equity, Justice, and Conflict Transformation, having offered a vision for addressing environmental justice through the lens of CT. They were requested to provide reflections on their course content and guest speakers' lectures using the framework of CT. Some students highlighted the importance of systems change, while others drew on the inter- and intrapersonal aspects, including flexibility, resilience, and engaged listening.

CT Course Integration: SoE three courses this summer that integrated CT, focusing on local environmental issues and the potential for conflict to drive positive change. In *Wicked Problems*, students explored pressing challenges on California's Central Coast, such as climate adaptation, land use, and economic inequality, using Lederach's CT framework to analyze and address environmental issues. The *Understanding Place* course immersed students in local contexts, blending theoretical and practical applications of CT with group discussions on how conflict can shape a community's environmental dynamics. *Environmental Analysis* investigated how conflict between marginalized tribal groups and conservation efforts has led to cooperative solutions that incorporate indigenous knowledge.

FACULTY RESEARCH

The faculty research program provides an exciting opportunity for our faculty, and many projects have been featured in public events. In September 2024 we convened a panel of several 2023 recipients to identify new insights into conflict, and the 2023 recipients' final reports are posted on our website.

The 2025 application cycle was overseen by CT program manager Erin Anderson and advised by director Sarah Stroup and Pillar 4 head Netta Avineri. Allison Berke (MIIS), David Wick (MIIS), Michole Biancosino (College), and Suzanne Gurland (College), served as the selection committee. For 2025, we received 29 applications, representing a range of disciplines. The committee had four criteria for evaluation: the substantive relationship of the project to conflict transformation, contribution to knowledge, feasibility, and impact potential. The committee also considered disciplinary diversity, support across the institution, and revisions to proposals received in a prior round to incorporate deeper engagement with conflict and transformation. Eleven projects were awarded research grants.

Principal Investigator(s)	Project Title	Department
Ellery Foutch	From Weapons of War to Emblems of Peace: The Columbian Liberty Bell, Peace Plows, and the Possibilities of Collective Memorials	American Studies
Jamie McCallum	A Better Bargain: Transforming Conflict Negotiation Processes Between Workers and Management	Sociology
John Schmitt	Optimal Scheduling Under Conflict	Mathematics
Marcia L Collaer	Origins of conflict-related personality traits	Psychology
Natalie Chwalisz, Sebnem Gumuscu	Populism beyond Borders: Unpacking Erdogan's support among Turkish Migrant Communities	Political Science
William Pyle	Russian Society, Patriotic Attachment, and the Legacy of the Early 1990s	Economics
Erica Barbarossa	The Intersection Between Accelerationism, Ecofascism, and Climate-Driven Conflict	Center for Terrorism, Extremism, and Counterterrorism (CTEC)
Hanna Notte	We Shall Outlast Them: How Russia's Conflict With the West Went Global	Center for Nonproliferation Studies
Katharine Petrich	From Conflict Predation to Stable Conservation: Leveraging Satellite Data for Illicit Economy Detection and Environmental Crime Resolution	CTEC and Nonproliferation
Moyara Ruehsen, Jay Shapiro	Using Conflict Transformation to Break Down Barriers to Cross-Border Financial Crime Investigations	Financial Crime Intelligence / Nonproliferation
William Potter, Siegfried Hecker, Yanliang Pan	Conflict Transformation in Sino-US Nuclear Relations	Center for Nonproliferation Studies

CROSS PILLAR INITIATIVES

We are solidifying internal foundations while engaging with more external stakeholders. The CT Collaborative staff focus on communications, assessment, and strengthening our network. We hope to avoid creating a “hub-and-spoke” model, creating instead a robust network of partnerships. Our expanded CT monthly meetings address various themes: budget management, convenings planning, reflection with outgoing president Laurie Patton, and restorative practices with sujatha baliga. In August, our external advisory board discussed engagement on Israel and Palestine and President Patton’s departure.

Strengthening Middlebury’s Foundation in CT

We continue to engage with Middlebury stakeholders to raise awareness of and interest in CT. We led a 90-minute presentation at the Board of Trustees retreat. On our campuses, our fall efforts included:

- *Institute:* Netta Avineri and CT students have presented at MIIS Preview Day, with the Student Engagement Team, at the New Student opportunity fair, and with the MIIS Student Advocacy Council. Our CT Fellows meet with Schools Abroad and with Sustainability partners.
- *College:* We have convened the Mindfulness@Midd group and led a workshop with ~60 alumni during homecoming weekend. We shared our work with Athletics staff in August and hosted tables at the family resource fair, academic forum, and incoming student scavenger hunt.

Proactive Preparation for Challenging Issues

Over the summer, we made proactive plans for engaging at the College on two hot-button issues this fall: the continuing war in Gaza and the 2024 election.

- *Israel-Palestine engagement:* We have been fostering constructive engagement on this issue since spring 2023 (see earlier reports). First, we created reflection and planning spaces for faculty and staff, including new faculty orientation (36 participants) and a circle discussion with 20 key faculty, staff, and administrators. We co-sponsored October events with the Center for Teaching, Learning, and Research: one on “safer spaces” with Natalie Kouri-Towe (Concordia University), and another with Wendy Pearlman (Northwestern University). We integrated structured dialogues on Israel and Palestine at the ELP opening workshops (~36 participants total). Second, we supported deeper investigation and complexity. With the Arabic department, we co-sponsored a talk by Amira Hass, an Israeli journalist who has lived in Palestinian territories for thirty years. With the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and the President’s office, we have supported two parallel initiatives in 2024-25, one investigating anti-Semitism and Jewish life on campus, the other investigating Anti-Palestinian/Anti-Arab discrimination & Islamophobia on campus.
- *Election 2024 & Good Talks:* we piloted a new event series in Spring 2024 to provide spaces for constructive conversations about political issues. Each event began with a short overview from an expert followed by guided small group conversations. We tackled seven topics this fall (trust in democracy, housing, reproductive policy, environment, foreign policy, health care, immigration), and partnered with the 2024 Clifford Symposium and an expert from University of Vermont. Our three student interns co-designed the questions and co-facilitated each event, with 12-40 attendees at each event. After the election, we held a community discussion at Middlebury’s Town Hall theater with 70 attendees of diverse ideologies and backgrounds. We ended with a post-inauguration event in January with Prof. Bert Johnson and RJ leader sujatha baliga.

Assessment

Every Pillar gathers assessment data for their programs and reviews this information to inform future efforts. The CT Collaborative staff and other campus partners frequently join these conversations.

- *Undergraduate Students and Learning Goal 1:* The major assessment innovation of the CT Collaborative has been to design and implement a new pre-post- survey that tracks progress on our first learning goal, “a new understanding of conflict.” 220 students were asked to take the pre-

/post- survey in 2024. Professor Erik Bleich and Dr. Maurits Van der Veen (College of William and Mary) have created a data dictionary to support our future analysis.

- *College Faculty and Staff*: the Engaged Listening Project gathers information before and after the ELP cohorts (see appendices). When asked, “How likely are you to recommend this experience to a colleague?” with 5 indicating “highly likely,” the average rating was 4.85.
- *Experiential Learning Students*: In September, Pillar 3 educators circulated a post-experience survey to all CT participants (62 respondents). When asked “do you feel you have expanded your knowledge, skills, and/or dispositions related to conflict transformation in any manner through your summer experience?” 98% (48/49) answered yes (see appendices).
- *Alumni*: the Office of Assessment and Institutional Research will include questions about conflict transformation in their alumni survey. Results will be shared with us this spring.

Impact with External Constituents

We are building national and local partnerships. At the national level, these include (1) Braver Angels’ “Braver Politics” initiative, (2) George Washington University’s Planet Forward (for whom CT is the theme of their April 2025 conference), and (3) continued work with the Institute for Citizens and Scholars’ working group on civic measurement. Locally, we are engaged with:

- In California, the Healing & Reconciliation Institute; Monterey County Civil Rights Office; the Collaborative for Right Relations; Santa Catalina School; and Big Sur Land Trust.
- In Vermont, nuWave consultancy group; the Town Hall Theater in Middlebury; See Change Sessions/ Signal Kitchen; and the Vermont Restorative Approaches Collaborative (VTRAC).

Forum on Education Abroad Conference: In October in Athens, Greece, educators from across Middlebury (MIIS and Schools Abroad) led the [opening plenary panel](#) at The Forum’s Europe, Middle East and Africa Conference. With the EUSA Paris director, they identified the productive possibilities of conflict in intercultural education and how students can transform their understanding of themselves and deepen interpersonal, intercultural relationships through constructive conflict. They shared Middlebury’s approach to international, cross-cultural education to a broad audience.

Professional Development in Higher Ed: the Engaged Listening Project (ELP) is receiving increasing external attention. CT director Stroup presented at a Constructive Dialogue Institute webinar (450 attendees) on “rebuilding resilient campus communities” ([link](#)). We met with Emerson College staff and administrators to discuss responses to divisive campus events, with more coming in 2025. Finally, we met with The Forum (see above) to discuss supporting study abroad staff.

Finally, we regularly connect and share resources with those who reach out to learn more about our work. These include dialogue facilitators in Buffalo, New York, the national consultant group Columinate, the University of Vermont’s Presidential Dialogue Initiative, Vermont Family Mediators association, national media outlets, and Crisis Management Institute (Helsinki).

Media Coverage and Communications Streams

- *Interfaith America Podcast*: President Patton spoke about conflict transformation and the Engaged Listening Project in a plenary session for the 2024 Teaching Interfaith Understanding Faculty Seminar with Eboo Patel; the conversation was posted on the [Interfaith America podcast](#).
- *Good Talks*: the November post-election community reflection was covered in *Seven Days* ([link](#)), the *Rutland Herald* ([link](#)), and the *Addison Independent* ([link](#)).
- In August 2023, the Collaborative launched a new podcast, *Opening Up* (website [here](#)). We have released twenty-six episodes. We have 1,355 total downloads, for an average of 52 downloads per episode. We feature faculty grant recipients, guest speakers, and conversations with partners.
- Other channels include our website, newsletter, and Instagram, now with 387 followers.

Appendix A: Summary of Engaged Listening Project Feedback from Fall 2024

On a scale of 1 to 5 how likely are you to recommend this experience to a colleague?

- Average rating: 4.85
- Median rating: 5

Select comments from narrative prompts:

What worked well in the ELP program for you? What was the most valuable or meaningful part of the program for you?

- “I appreciated our large and small circles—and the way that each of our meetings built on the last at the level of practice, even as the nature of our questions varied. I am much more attentive to how I’m listening (whether in the context of a structured exercise or not) than I used to be, and I look forward to working on that. I’m grateful for everyone’s commitment to shared vulnerability, honesty, and confidentiality.”
- “This ELP session exceeded all my expectations. I don’t know what I thought it would be like, maybe more generic training, but that it was not. It challenged me, encouraged me, supported me and, just as importantly, taught me immensely. The most important part, in addition to providing a community of like-minded people and educators, was the blending of community and content-building methodologies it explored. I came out learning something new out of every session and took those approaches into the classroom and into my everyday life.”

Please list the tool or takeaways you have gained or expanded from our time together? What of these tools will you use in the future and how?

- “Agreements, restorative circles. More broadly, my sense of how to conduct a classroom discussion has become much more fine-grained, even as I’ve found myself opening up the ways students can respond to prompts.”
- “I have a far better sense of the importance of community building as a goal within the class. I also have learned to ‘just’ listen more often, as opposed to thinking about how to solve problems or respond. I also think the sense of community I gained at the beginning of the school year (from the summer workshop) was a huge boost to my overall (positive) sense of being a part of Middlebury. I have built in more time in my classes for community building and been far more intentional in speaking in class about the benefits of doing so. More generally, I hope I can become even better at ‘just’ listening.”

Any other thoughts or comments you wish to share?

- “I have been so surprised by the value I’ve found in participating in this project. It has been a humbling experience in the best way possible.”
- “I really wish this was something that all members of Middlebury would take part in with the full intent to be open to learning new ways of doing things and approaching group interactions.”

Appendix B: Selections from Experiential Learning Post-Experience Survey (Pillar 3)

The post-experience survey was administered in September 2024 and received 62 responses. Below, we offer results for the questions specifically related to CT knowledge, skills, and dispositions.

PROGRESS ON LEARNING GOALS

“The knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to transform conflict into more constructive dynamics can be applied on personal, interpersonal, and structural levels. Do you feel you have expanded your knowledge, skills, and/or dispositions related to conflict transformation in any manner through your summer experience?” **Yes: 97.9% No: 2.1%**

“Does this new learning/development include a “commitment to act”?” **Yes: 81% No: 19%**

EXAMPLES OF NEW UNDERSTANDINGS AND SKILLS

“Please choose a specific understanding, perspective, or skill you developed or deepened that connects to the core CT learning goals...As a reminder, the CT Collaborative seeks to foster: 1) a new understanding of conflict (knowledge); 2) skills to understand self and others (skills); 3) and a commitment to act (disposition).”

Select responses (key learning outcomes underlined)

- I think I've gained a new understanding of conflict as something that's not scary or something to run from. I think before I was hesitant to resolve conflicts because it's scary but I think that fear has decreased knowing that identifying problems and saying them out loud doesn't actually create more problems if handled properly.
- I have developed better skills in understanding how I resolve/handle conflicts, and how those around might react and engage with conflict as well. Working with a team so closely all summer was a new experience for me and the learning curve of understanding everyone's personalities works together.
- Through diiVe and the conflict transformation programming, I have been able to understand how I function best as a coworker and how to be receptive to my colleagues' similar, or different, needs. This development is vital in how I communicate my needs and am flexible to other needs that are communicated to me.
- I have learned that it is okay, at some point, to let go! In my summer project, I had a component where I had to organize for community dialogues. However, we realized that there were growing tensions between the communities we were working with, and decided to let that component go. This taught me to be flexible.
- I feel this summer experience highlighted both my ignorance and responsibility. There was so much history and perspective I was not aware of. I was learning everyday. Speaking with community partners and hearing actual life stories is always a push to keep going, to act.
- One new skill I developed was the ability to lead teams where the individuals within it are close friends with conflict with one another. Being able to work with them and have to balance personal relationships with work was something that sticks out to me for what I learned.
- I learned how to relate genuinely to someone even if they've experienced trauma I can't imagine.

Appendix C: Selections from International Experiences Reflections

School in Jordan: “[Th]ese simulations gave the girls a feeling of empowerment and the sensation of successfully defending points and enacting policies.... Hence, it is with the heartiest confidence that I recommend that CT education be used to empower students from disadvantaged backgrounds and teach empowerment and critical thinking.”

School in Russia [currently in Kazakhstan]: “I realize the value in taking the time to fully immerse yourself in the context of an issue to understand it, and I think it is impossible to constructively transform a conflict without this crucial step.”

School in Taiwan: “The one-on-one conversations were very interesting and something that I haven’t done before. I felt that this section gave me an opportunity to have serious conversations on a deep level with people that I typically wouldn’t talk with to the same extent. Some of these conversations were hard, but they definitely helped open my eyes to understand that everyone’s struggles are different and the only way to understand them is by listening.”

School in Chile: “Building trust... provides a solid foundation for the development of the work. It allows us to enjoy this learning process and address challenges constructively, without falling into excessive anxiety or uncertainty about the progress of the work. In our specific project, we have found that the best ways to foster this type of trust are through spending informal moments together to avoid being strangers to one another, understanding different communication styles, dividing responsibilities with consideration for everyone, and holding in- person meetings.”

School in Cameroon: “Without this resource, I truly do not think that I would be able to feel like a fish in water in Cameroon as I do now, and am sure that I will jealously guard the tools Christiane has provided me with on the next dozen legs of my trip around the world.”