



Spring 2025 Newsletter

Letter from the Director

Moments of doubt are inevitable... [yet] seemingly miraculous advances are in fact the result of many people taking small steps together over a long period of time. As Václav Havel wrote, “hope is not prognostication. It is an orientation of the spirit, an orientation of the heart.”

- Paul Loeb, *The Impossible Will Take a Little While*

Dear friends,

Since March 2022, the work of the CT Collaborative has engaged hundreds of students, staff, and faculty. When we began, few people at Middlebury knew what “conflict transformation” was. Today, there is an interdisciplinary network working to foster the knowledge, skills, and dispositions for constructive conflict.

These are the many people taking big and small steps together. Every day, these folks are practicing curiosity and collaboration. They are embracing complexity and exploring the deep roots of conflict. They are speaking up for themselves and supporting the needs of others. The CT compass helps orient them towards constructive conflict. They are awesome.

So - if you are looking for hope at this moment, keep reading. We start by featuring a few of our amazing external partners. You’ll also hear about great events and program updates. You can learn about [other partnerships](#) and events at our website.

As the world shifts under our feet, our own efforts evolve too. I am thrilled to announce that my friend and colleague Dr. Netta Avineri will take over as CT Collaborative director on July 1. [Click here](#) to read more about Netta’s work with our graduate students, her expertise in intercultural communication, and how she understands the tensions that arise in deep collaboration.

This conflict transformation work has reshaped my understanding of how to teach, learn, and work with others. It will be a rich last few months - [traveling](#) to Northern Ireland, giving talks on CT at [Middlebury](#), GWU, and SUNY New Paltz, attending the MIIS graduate seminar ([RSVP here](#)), and joining a mediation workshop and CT convenings in May and June. After my upcoming sabbatical year in Finland and Vermont, I look forward to bringing new skills and knowledge back to the Middlebury community.

At this tumultuous moment, I could not be more committed to our core purpose: education. Middlebury's global liberal arts commitment - seeing the world from many different perspectives - is an exercise in constructive conflict. Education brings us new information and ideas, helping us grow and change. It is an endeavor worth celebrating - and defending.

With gratitude and hope,

Sarah Stutz

PARTNERSHIPS

Partner in Experiential Learning: Respond Crisis Translation



Kristen Mullins (left) gathers with RCT students

Each summer, an inter-institutional, diverse cohort of students and partners gather for an immersive learning experience. This summer's program focuses on language access and language justice within immigration, health, and education, and is being developed in collaboration with [Respond Crisis Translation](#) (RCT). Language deprivation prevents hundreds of millions of people from accessing basic human rights. RCT mobilizes to end the systemic translation deficit through direct service, workforce development, and systems change.

The Center for Community Engagement has recruited undergraduate participants from Middlebury College, Tufts, and Georgetown. They will work with RCT to connect with community partners in Boston, New York, and New Haven, with direct support from alumnus Jack Carew '20.

Seeds of Peace: Partner in Youth Education



Critical Issues Forum participants

The Critical Issues Forum (CIF) had its annual gathering this March. 100 students and teachers from around the world gathered to discuss nuclear disarmament and cross-cultural understanding. CIF's new partnership with [Seeds of Peace](#) helped bring students and teachers from India and Pakistan into the conversation; the late founder of Seeds of Peace, John Wallach, graduated from Middlebury in 1964. These students joined others from the United States and Japan to discuss advancing a world free of nuclear weapons. In Middlebury's network of CT partners, the Bread Loaf Teachers Network (BLTN) brought six youth from Aiken (SC), Louisville (KY), and the Santa Fe Indian School (NM).

This year's conference theme was *"80 Years of Struggle: Revitalizing Nuclear Disarmament and Nonproliferation Through Cross-Cultural Youth Engagement."* Students shared presentations and connected with peers from different schools, states, and countries. Clifton Truman Daniel, the grandson of President Truman and a keynote speaker, shared his personal account of meeting atomic bombing survivors. For him and for CIF, friendship between individuals from different cultures and countries is vital in progressing toward a more peaceful world.

Research Partnership in Cameroon



Middlebury student speaking with a research participant in Cameroon



The Middlebury School in Cameroon is in its third year of partnership with the Yaounde-based Center for Gender, Peace and Security ([CGEPS](#)). CGEPS is an independent research entity that works to integrate women into research in Cameroon and into global peace and security initiatives in Africa and around the world. In Cameroon and other Middlebury Schools Abroad, this community-based experiential learning expands the student experience while also benefiting community partners.

CGEPS director Dr. Eric Fofack has worked with students on CT-funded research projects on women and gender-based violence in the Cameroonian media landscape. Students benefit enormously from the guidance of Dr. Fofack and CGEPS as they apply their French language skills to a professional setting. In addition, conflict transformation theory has provided these international research teams with language to discuss the complicated socio-cultural shifts demanded of gender equality initiatives.

Partnering to Transform Climate Stories: Planet Forward 2025



Frank Sesno '77, Sarah Stroup, and Netta Avineri at Planet Forward

On April 17 and 18, hundreds of students, journalists, and environmentalists gathered at George Washington University for the [2025 Planet Forward Summit](#), a project created by Middlebury alum Frank Sesno '77. Many Middlebury students, faculty, and staff were in attendance. [Carolyn Finney](#) and [Bill McKibben](#) were keynote speakers, and the summit opened with framing remarks from CT directors Sarah Stroup and Netta Avineri.

The theme, “The Climate Divide: New Narratives to Transform the Conflict,” was developed through a year-long partnership between Planet Forward and the CT Collaborative. In October, Stroup and Avineri offered an online workshop for student correspondents to support critical self-awareness, active listening, and curious questions. Their efforts culminated in the [StoryFest awards](#) at the Summit - among the winners was Middlebury’s own Devin Santikarma ‘25. Recordings of the panels will be available on the Summit’s website soon!

UPCOMING AND RECENT EVENTS



Join us on May 2 in person or online!

On Friday, May 2, join the [Graduate Pillar](#) of the CT Collaborative for an interactive exploration of conflict transformation. The day-long seminar will offer opportunities to learn and practice, highlighting community-based advocacy, approaches to environmental conflict, methods for countering extremism, engaging across cultures, sustainable peacebuilding, ethical storytelling, and more.

Over 40 Conflict Transformation (CT) Fellows and faculty/staff will share their year-long interdisciplinary projects, courses, and research. In the afternoon, participants will have opportunities to build CT skills through engaged sessions facilitated by community partners.

Participants can join for any or all parts of the event, both in Monterey, CA and online. [RSVP here](#), and reach out with questions to Dr. Netta Avineri (navineri@middlebury.edu).

Peacebuilding, Activism, and Social Change



Dr. Matthew Breay Bolton and Dr. Emily Welty panel discussion

In early April, the College hosted Dr. Emily Welty and Dr. Matthew Breay Bolton of Pace University for a week-long residency. Welty and Bolton were 2024 Honorary Degree recipients at Middlebury and were part of a 2017 Nobel Prize-winning campaign to abolish nuclear weapons. You can see a recording of their April 7 [panel discussion here](#).

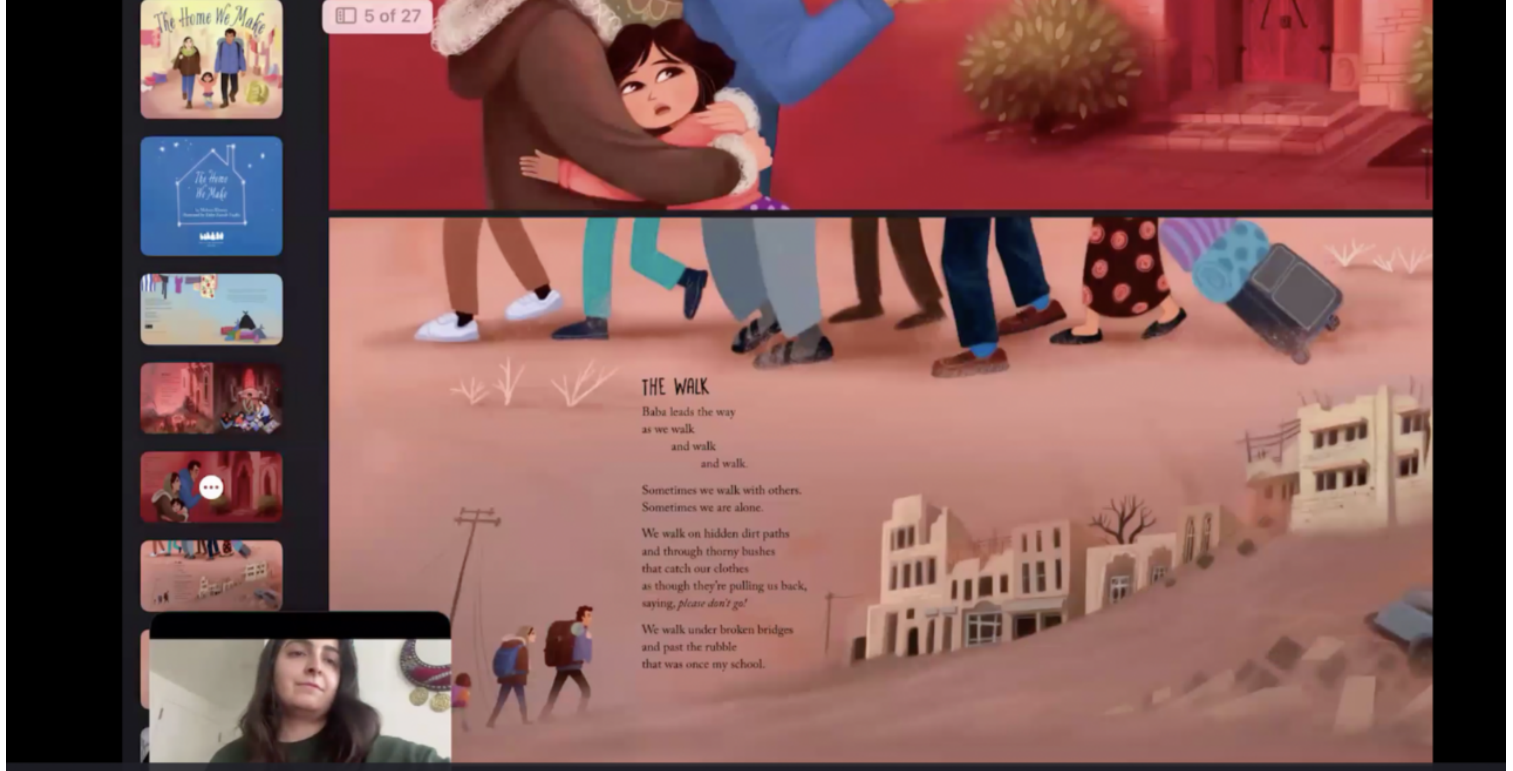
This mini-residency was a partnership between the [Rohatyn Center for Global Affairs](#) and the [Franklin Environmental Center](#). Over the week, our guests had many meals with students, led workshops on non-violent direct action and the arts, discussed the United Nations and global governance, toured the Knoll, and met with students and faculty. The Pillar Heads of the CT Collaborative also met with Welty and Bolton to discuss pedagogy and experiential learning in peace and conflict studies programs. Look for Bolton's appearance in the RGCA "[New Frontiers](#)" podcast in the coming months!

The Home We Make:

Maham Khwaja, NextGen, and the School of Writing in Karachi

On April 12, the Bread Loaf Teachers Network (BLTN) and its [Next Generation Leadership Network](#) Youth Advisory Board met with author, filmmaker, and artist Maham Khwaja for a writing workshop. Khwaja read from *The Home We Make*, her children's book (recently [featured on NPR](#)) which narrates the story of a Pakistani migrant family. She then led youth in a workshop focusing on incorporating sensory details into writing and offered guidance for an accompanying art activity.

NextGen youth were fortunate to be joined by Mohsin Tejani (MA '01) and 17 Pakistani peers associated with [The School of Writing](#) in Karachi. Participants shared creative pieces centering around the idea that when we engage our senses and imaginations, home is something we can take with us when we're displaced or traveling.



Mohsin Tejani shares pages from her children's book

College Professional Development: More Skills, Stronger Community

“This workshop changed my overall conceptualization and approach to some fundamental aspects of teaching. I also think just being in the seminar itself—from meeting to meeting and especially the two days in the summer—was very beneficial.” Rebecca Bennette, Professor and Chair of the Department of History and Fall 2024 ELP Fellow

We have just closed the applications for the Fall 2025 cohorts of the [Engaged Listening Project](#) (ELP). In our growing network of CT partners, we are excited to have ELP alums Suzanne Gurland (Psychology) and Matt Lawrence (Sociology) as new facilitators for the fall semester.

For those looking for short skill-building opportunities, our Spring 2025 [CT Lunch Lab series](#) has several more workshops in May.

This has been a big year for the ELP. In 2024-25, we expanded the curriculum to include skill-building in both structured dialogue and restorative practices. This spring, Dima Ayoub (Arabic), Brian Lind (Student Affairs), Jonathan Miller-Lane (Education Studies), and Lida Winfield (Dance) have led two cohorts of 23 college faculty and staff. We also included a workshop with our Civil Rights & Title IX Coordinator to better understand trauma-informed practices with our students.



The professional development work we've been doing and student training will expand next year with a new peer facilitator program. We've hired a wonderful new crew who met with Lida Winfield, Brian Lind, Crystal Jones and Noreen Pecsock.

That's all... for now!

Follow~Contact~Listen



Kathryn Wasserman Davis Collaborative in Conflict Transformation
161 Adirondack view, Middlebury, VT 05753
ConflictTransformation@middlebury.edu



Middlebury

View this email [online](#).

152 Maple Road Suite 203 | Middlebury, VT 05753 US

This email was sent to .

To continue receiving our emails, add us to your address book.

[Subscribe](#) to our email list.