



October 2025 Newsletter

Letter from the Executive Director



Middlebury Social Impact Corps '25 cohort

Dear Conflict Transformation Collaborative at Middlebury partners,

What does it take to be a leader during periods of conflict and change? Who are the leaders in your personal, academic, and professional lives that you look to for inspiration and guidance during times of conflict and change? In this newsletter, we are featuring the range of leadership development programs, approaches, and initiatives across the CT Collaborative, through curricular engagement, cohort-based peer learning, professional development, and experiential learning opportunities.

When I began my time as Executive Director over the summer, I sought to identify connection points across the many impactful programs and projects facilitated by CT pillar leads, faculty, staff, and students. I immediately noted that there are so many creative, innovative leadership development examples across the pillars. It is exciting to highlight this work and continue deepening this leadership focus within the conflict transformation education space, alongside multiple internal and external partners. In this newsletter you will see compelling examples of peer facilitation, youth engagement, professional development, cohorts, mentorship, skill building, fellowships, facilitation, iteration, layered training models, and relationship-building - all efforts embodied by humility, vulnerability, and collaboration with intention.

In September I facilitated a session with Middlebury College student organization leaders, focusing on diverse approaches to conflict and change in their day-to-day work. This semester I am working with students across degree programs at MIIS in a course called "Conflict Transformation Principles and Practices". It is inspiring to see students' interest in deepening their leadership capacity through meaningful engagement with CT-related knowledge, skills, and dispositions. Students pursuing the [Academic Cluster](#) at the College are broadening their leadership capabilities, selecting from over 75 courses taught by 90 faculty across 45 departments and 15 experiential learning opportunities. And the robust Fellowship programs across Middlebury graduate programs, including Change, Cohort, Mentor, Pedagogy, and GA Fellows demonstrate innovative approaches to leadership at this critical time. The list goes on and on.

We can rise to the challenge of developing ourselves and our collective capacity for ethical action across communities, demonstrating new forms of leadership to tackle the world’s most pressing issues. Join us - the time is now.

Sincerely,

Netta Avineri

Dr. Netta Avineri
Middlebury Conflict Transformation Collaborative Executive Director

CT in Leadership Development

Pillar One: High School Education

Business Cards, Determination, and Hope: Leadership Development in BLTN NextGen

In Aiken, South Carolina this month, [Bread Loaf Next Generation Leadership Network](#) (NextGen) South Carolina youth testified at a Fall Public Hearing in Children’s Issues sponsored by the Joint Citizens and the South Carolina Legislative Committee on Children. Quintin Garrett and Ezekiel Whetstone advocated for a youth-serving community center in Aiken. Garrett and Whetstone testified on their own while their teacher and mentor, Dr. Kayla Hostetler (MA ’24), watched remotely. The young men are moving on to research the cost of their vision through an inquiry trip to a youth community center in their peer NextGen site at Lawrence, Massachusetts.



“I could not be more proud of Ezekiel and Quintin,” comments Hostetler. “When they first joined NextGen, they were hesitant to engage, but over the years they have grown into confident, capable leaders. In this presentation, they were articulate, composed, and adaptive even in the face of last-minute changes. Their professionalism did not go unnoticed. An organization leader in Aiken County was deeply impressed by their abilities, calling them “the best speakers in the room” and inviting NextGen Aiken youth to collaborate with her organization in advancing a bill. Ezekiel and Quintin’s transformation exemplifies the very essence of leadership and the power of youth voice in action. It shows why NextGen matters. They left this meeting with business cards, determination, and hope.”

Pillar Two: Undergraduate Campus Life

From Participant to Facilitator



The [Engaged Listening Project](#) is a professional development program for Middlebury College faculty and staff offered through Pillar Two. Through participation in the cohort, participants develop a wide range of tools and exercises for navigating conflict and change within their sites of practice. This Fall, Suzanne Gurland (Psychology) and Matt Lawrence (Sociology) joined Brian Lind (Student Affairs) and Lida Winfield (Dance and Conflict Transformation) to facilitate two cohorts of the Engaged Listening Program. Both Matt and Suzanne were participants in the Spring 2024 cohort. In talking with them about their current leadership experience, they offer reflections on personal growth, cultural change, and the dual role of participant/facilitator.

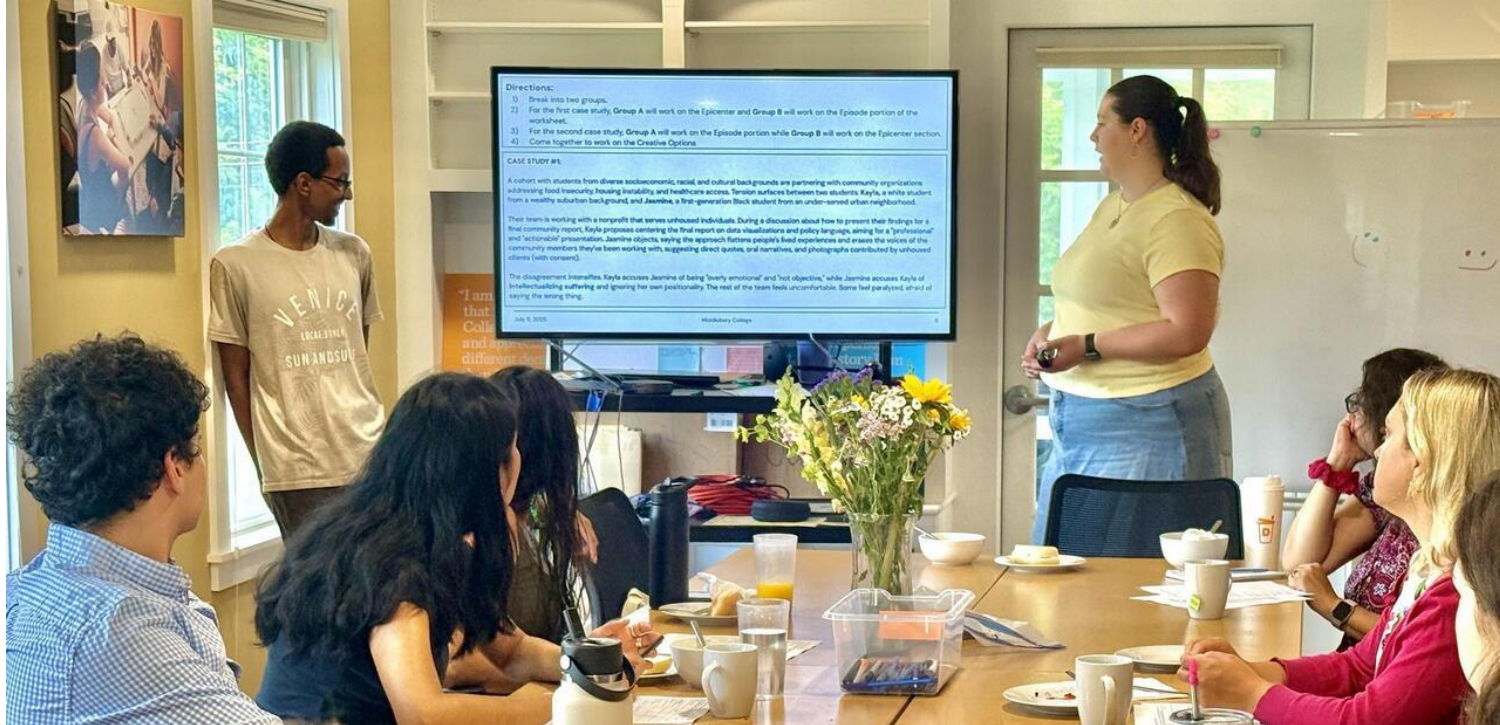
For Suzanne Gurland, becoming an ELP facilitator offered a new perspective, clarifying the relationship between "classroom practice/climate and the ability to address conflict." She notes that facilitating ELP instilled the "courage to try new things in the classroom," such as structured dialogue, and models leadership through "a willingness to try, and only partially succeed, and then figure out how to adapt for the next time around."

Similarly, Matt Lawrence sees his role as integral to a broader goal: "if we are to shift the culture of Middlebury, it will take all of us." He was motivated by the desire for "better conversations, stronger community, and deeper listening on campus." Matt emphasizes that being a facilitator helps him practice the skills and understand how others respond, thereby "building the muscles of engagement" and confirming that ELP's community building component is foundational to the success of its engaged listening techniques. Suzanne and Matt's reflections on their experiences demonstrate the impact of peer engagement on leadership and institutional capacity building.

[Applications](#) are now open for the Spring 2026 cohort.

Pillar Three: Undergraduate Experiential Learning

Peer Facilitation and Skill Building in Community-Based Experiential Learning



Peer facilitation is a core component of the CT Collaborative’s leadership development approach. In that vein, educators across the undergraduate Experiential Learning Centers (ELC’s) gathered in winter 2025 to consider what they had learned from students and community partners involved in the 12 experiential programs offered the previous summer. A key theme to emerge was the desire for more context-specific conflict analysis knowledge and skills. Over the next few months, Kristen Mullins (Assistant Director for global and intercultural programs in the Center for Community Engagement) recruited, selected, and began training students who had prior experience in one of the Experiential Pillar’s CT summer programs. So began the **Conflict Analysis Peer Facilitator program** pilot year!

Four student leaders - Cassie Pfitzenmayer ‘26, Christ Devot Nkurunziza ‘26, Mohamed Noor ‘27, and Samuel Eshetu ‘26 - met weekly in the spring to ground themselves in theories and strategies of conflict transformation, to review and tailor the conflict analysis workshop template to align with the specifics of summer 2025 programs, and to strengthen their presentation skills - with help from [Oratory Now](#). This summer, they put finishing touches on the specific session plans and facilitated, in pairs, conflict analysis workshops for each of the Pillar Three 2025 summer programs supported by the CT Collaborative.

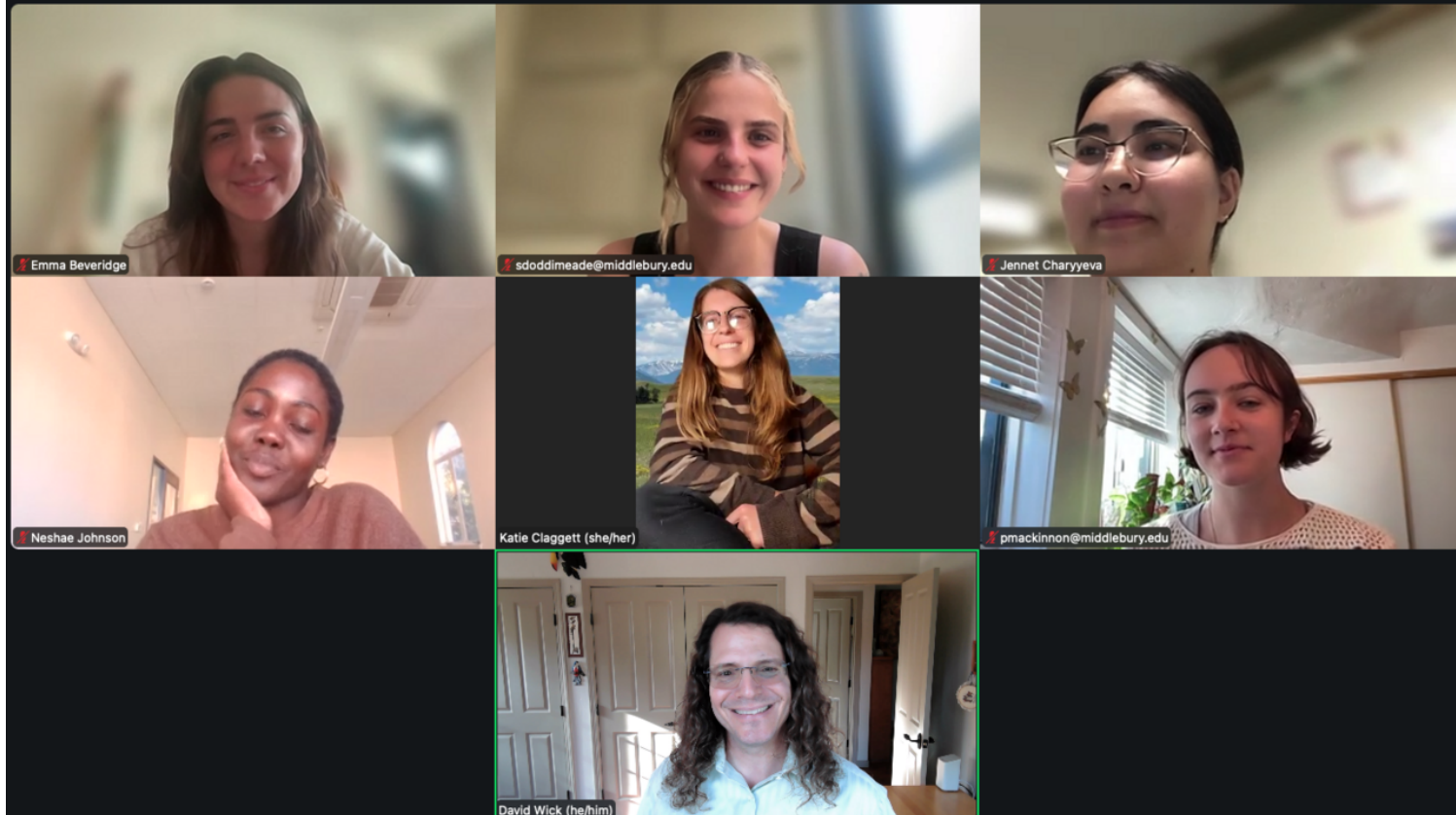
Wrap-up included consideration of what to continue and what to change for 2026 and reviewing post-program assessments from students who participated in their summer workshops. Assessments indicated significant knowledge gain in areas of conflict analysis. Finally, just last month, the team wrapped up by joining the all-participan Pillar Three 2025 reflection dinner. This iterative process is key to Pillar Three's ongoing engagement with educators, students, and community partners. Thank you summer 2025 Conflict Analysis Peer Facilitators!

Pillar Four: Graduate Training and Research

Building Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Skills through UNESCO Story Circles:

A Train the Trainer Model

This year’s six CT Mentor Fellows - Emma Beveridge, Neshae Johnson, Katie Claggett, Sophie Doddimeade, Jennet Charyyeva, and Paige MacKinnon - all successfully participated in the Cohort Fellowship in ‘24-’25. To kick off their engagement with one another and their cohorts they engaged with [UNESCO Story Circles](#), facilitated by David Wick (Pillar Four Head). This engagement was the first step in a series of knowledge and skill building activities for CT Graduate Cohort Fellows with whom the Mentor Fellows work closely throughout the year.



This training method builds community and develops intercultural knowledge and skills for CT-related work. In designing this training UNESCO intentionally created an adaptable methodology with a [freely available manual](#) in many languages.

The CT Mentor Fellows first reflected thoughtfully on the prompt “Think of a person who you know personally or who is known to you who does a really good job of connecting with different people. List their qualities.” This prompt allows participants to co-create a definition of what community-building and intercultural communication can look like; in this case, the Mentor Fellows highlighted curiosity, honesty, calm, and support. Building on that opening, the Mentor Fellows worked in smaller groups for the three step Story Circle methodology.

After debriefing their experience, Fellows discussed ways to facilitate a Story Circle for their mentees to guild community and collective skillsets. One participant noted “...nice experience to share. Lots of holding tension, dual perspectives, engagement across differences. Both practicing these and sharing our experiences with them. We saw ways that each of our lives have taken shape and shifted over time.” This methodology demonstrates a powerful connection to the knowledge, skills, and dispositions collectively fostered in the CT Collaborative’s ongoing work with conflict transformation.

Pillar Five: Global Engagement

Engaging with International Education Leaders in France and Spain

Earlier this month, 80 international education leaders, engaging with International Education Leaders in France and Spain, came together in Paris and Madrid to learn more about Conflict Transformation and how the approach can help them engage with conflict and change cases that arise with students, staff, faculty, and host families in their programs abroad. Two regional professional organizations - Association of American University Programs in France ([APUAF](#)) and Study Abroad Programs in Spain ([APUNE](#)) - provided this professional development during their regular annual meetings.



In France, David Wick, Phyllis Stinson (CT Abroad Program Manager), and Agnes Roche (Middlebury CT Fellow), facilitated two afternoon workshops with 50 study abroad program leaders. These sessions also included EUSA, a key CT partner in Europe, Middlebury School in France Associate Director Amy Tondou and two former MIIS International Education Management (IEM) students working in study abroad programs in Paris. In Madrid, Gabriel Guillén (MIIS Spanish Professor) and Wick engaged with 25 participants in an afternoon workshop. This session featured Middlebury School in Spain Director Patricia Rodríguez and a MIIS IEM student working in Madrid.

In both countries, participants focused on developing their dialogue and conflict analysis skills, and explored their own conflict styles. Session leaders adapted the *Conflict Analysis Tool* previously developed by colleagues in Pillar Three. Participants were asked to share about conflicts they encounter in their work (e.g., host family concerns, challenges between students and/or staff). Meaningful case studies were created based on these submissions, allowing session participants to dig into conflict transformation approaches using their own experiences on the ground.

RECENT AND UPCOMING EVENTS



Friday, October 17th, ELP Cohort Fellows met with student Peer Conflict Coaches on the Middlebury campus. Without taking sides or imposing solutions, the Peer Conflict Coaches offer free support to help Middlebury students navigate conflicts through mediation, dialogue, and coaching. The goal is to create spaces where all parties can work together toward understanding and resolution. Cohort leaders led several exercises and discussed methods that focused on community building.



Friday, October 24th, students, staff, faculty, and community members gathered at MIIS for an evening of reflection, storytelling, and shared meals. MIIS alum Michael Shaikh was in conversation with CT Collaborative Executive Director Netta Avineri about his new book *The Last Sweet Bite*, weaving together powerful stories of memory, conflict, migration, cuisine, loss, and meaning. Guests later had the chance to taste dishes based on recipes featured in the book. Thank you to everyone who showed up to support and share this meaningful evening with us.



- 11/1 [Inauguration Poster Fair](#)
- 11/3 [VTRAC Lunch and Learn](#)
- 11/6 [Experiential Learning and Conflict Transformation Convening](#)
- 11/13 [The Role of Nonprofits in Social Change](#)
- 11/21 [The Eternal Song film screening](#)

EXTERNAL OPPORTUNITY

Carnegie's International Program is pleased to announce our new [Call for Proposals](#). This call seeks ideas that generate new insights, practical solutions, and policy-relevant approaches on two themes: **Movements of People** and **Non-State Actors**. We welcome proposals that explore how large-scale mobility, governance, and conflict prevention intersect, and how state and non-state actors shape peace and stability in an increasingly complex world. Carnegie is especially interested in work that connects rigorous analysis with practical action and that offers fresh approaches to understanding and addressing these challenges.

Key details

Grant size: \$1–3 million | **Term:** 24–36 months

Deadline: December 1, 2025 (11:59 p.m. EST)

Initial submission: ≤1,000 words + 50-word summary

That's all... for now!

Follow~Contact~Engage



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



Middlebury

[Manage](#) your preferences | [Opt Out](#) using TrueRemove™

Got this as a forward? [Sign up](#) to receive our future emails.

View this email [online](#).

152 Mapel 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.