



December 2025 Newsletter

Letter from the Executive Director

Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey



Panelists at Nonprofits and Social Change event at Monterey, November 12th.

2025 is quickly coming to a close, and there is plenty for all of us to reflect upon in the realm of conflict and change, at personal, interpersonal, institutional, systemic, and global scales. Our collective work to move conflict towards meaningful change has been and continues to be important and relevant at this time. In considering the relationships between current structures and the potential for future change - I am gaining inspiration from the notion of [imaginal cells](#), the cells in caterpillars that create the potential for transformation into butterflies.

At the CT Collaborative, we are looking ahead towards deepened forms of engagement, relationship-building, and partnership development, building upon the incredible work of so many students, colleagues, and partners over the past several years. In this newsletter, we highlight stories focused on the theme of "integration", in which diverse groups, stakeholders, programs, and/or sectors come together to deepen and broaden impact. For example, in Pillar Two (Undergraduate Campus Life), the selection

process for next semester's Engaged Listening Project was just completed, bringing in a new cohort of 23 faculty and staff across departments and programs to build individual and collective toolkits to steward conflict for productive change. Within Pillar Four, 30 CT Cohort Fellows across degree programs and areas of interest have engaged in deep reflection about their positionalities in relation to their professional commitments. The research grants selection committee has just completed their review process for the 2026 [Research Grant](#) recipients, five colleagues at Middlebury College and five at the Middlebury Institute who will bring their range of disciplinary expertise to pure, applied, and community-engaged research focused on conflict and change across contexts. Within Pillar Three (undergraduate experiential learning), the recent convening in Washington, DC allowed for integrated perspectives and mutual learning with faculty/staff and student teams from 17 higher education institutions across the country. You will note different forms of integration (e.g., Middlebury-internal, across multiple institutions) as well as stories written from diverse perspectives (e.g., Pillar Heads, students, program directors). Just this week, we participated in a compelling example of integration and partnership-building with the [Vermont Restorative Approaches Collaborative](#) (VTRAC) and [UP for Learning](#). Colleague Lida Winfield, 3 peer conflict coaches, and I presented at the December VTRAC Lunch and Learn, highlighting the work of the CT Collaborative and exploring opportunities for collaboration. Lindsey Halman, UP for Learning Executive Director, presented with a high school student colleague and Middlebury College intern about their work on restorative practices in schools at my Middlebury Institute course "Conflict Transformation Principles and Practices". As we continue broadening our partnerships within and beyond the Middlebury institution, we see ample compelling evidence of the role of integration in fostering meaningful relationships and cultivating impact at multiple scales.

We encourage you to continue engaging with our [Media and Resources](#) and hope to see you at future events (online and in-person). See below for more details and please reach out with ideas/opportunities for partnership/engagement in the coming year. Here's to a meaningful and promising 2026!

Sincerely,

Netta Avineri

Dr. Netta Avineri
Middlebury Conflict Transformation Collaborative Executive Director

CT in Leadership Development

Pillar One: High School Education

Integrating CT as a Student, Teacher, and Artist

Jonathan Fried (CT Cohort Fellow as School in France graduate student, faculty member in the BLSE Change curriculum, faculty member in the Summer Institute for Global Humanities) shared the following about his experience.



Although I was a graduate student at the Middlebury School in France in Paris and a CT Cohort Fellow for 2024-2025, I'm also a Bread Loaf School of English faculty member at the Summer Institute for Global Humanities and Vermont campuses ("Change" curriculum supported by CT) so I'm accustomed to alternating between being a teacher of graduate students and

being a graduate student myself, within my own areas of study. My experience as a CT Cohort Fellow brought me into contact with the other Fellows' remarkable range of projects and ideas, all new to me, and all from disciplines other than my own. Equally, my project was the only one considering theatre as a tool for CT. My innocence and curiosity about their efforts, and theirs about mine, had a unifying effect. We were *integrated* by our unfamiliarity and interest in each others' undertakings.

Additionally, having CT as a context for my project helped me integrate the past with the present. My research focused on *The Imaginary Invalid*, written by the 17th century French playwright Molière. The play is about reason in the face of superstition and extremism.

Examining the work through the CT-inspired lens of contemporary American society was a powerful reminder that we are not the first civilization to face these conflicts, that the classics can offer hope from the past, and that even the simple act of storytelling in the theatre, where we agree to temporarily step out of our private bubbles and share an experience with strangers, is perhaps the greatest act of integration still available to us.

Pillar Two: Undergraduate Campus Life

Practicing Structured Dialogue between Undergraduate Cohorts

On October 17th, the 25 participants from the faculty/staff [Engaged Listening Program](#) (ELP) and the 10 student [Peer Conflict Coaches](#) (PCC) program came together to learn about one another's work, program goals, and community building, as a compelling form of integration across faculty/staff and student initiatives. The ELP and the PCC are two vital, cohort-based programs housed within [PillarTwo](#) of the Conflict Transformation Collaborative.

Both programs are committed to cultivating a shared set of learning outcomes centered on knowledge, skills, and dispositions related to conflict and change. Also, both groups' knowledge goals focus on community building (understanding that people must feel connected to deepen learning) and critical self-reflection (exploring how our lived experience impacts how we show up for each other). During the cross-programmatic session, participants engaged in a structured dialogue about the notion of "home" at the undergraduate college - inviting meaningful reflection about community and belonging.



PCC Natalie Rose Whitten highlighted that she *"found the experience to be very encouraging. It felt so valuable to be able to talk with adults in our community who also care deeply about the work that we do. The skills we have learned and are continuing to learn have such a wide application which was demonstrated through the range of fields represented within ELP. Looking forward, I now feel more inspired to pursue conflict transformation further."* Having the facilitated discussion in this format was a unique opportunity to both listen and be listened to, allowing for new insights and perspectives among faculty, staff, and students in the two cohorts. As PCC Charlie Fisch noted about the integrated engagement, *"We got to talk to faculty and staff as people, outside of the identities we usually come to interactions with. We stepped back from those identities, and the conversation was not stuck in the bounds of that relationship."*

Pillar Three: Undergraduate Experiential Learning

Cross-Pillar Initiative: Projects for Peace and Middlebury Schools Abroad



Augustina Lima and Ignacio Rodriguez (grantees) holding a bottle of whey and a flask with microalgae, from their research.



Students of the partner high school adding plants to their lake as part of the sustainability initiative

[Projects for Peace \(Pillar Three\)](#) works with Middlebury Schools Abroad ([Pillar Five](#)) to extend partnerships to some of the universities that collaborate with Schools Abroad. Students at those universities are now eligible to apply for one of the program's \$10,000 grants which fund student-led and community-engaged activities dedicated to peace.

This new, integrated approach both contributes to the discussion of and commitment to peace-building on these campuses and strengthens Schools Abroad relationships, allowing for novel forms of inter-institutional engagement. The projects from these universities also add diversity to the broader Projects for Peace program. International Christian University (ICU) in Japan and Universidad ORT Uruguay each successfully completed a two-year pilot program and are now invited annually to submit proposals. Recently, an ICU student spread the message of "the inhumanity of nuclear weapons" by arranging for guest speakers and special exhibits on their campus. A student team from ORT Uruguay developed curricula for and installed lab equipment at a high school to help teachers and students explore and address the effects of dairy farm waste management on water quality.

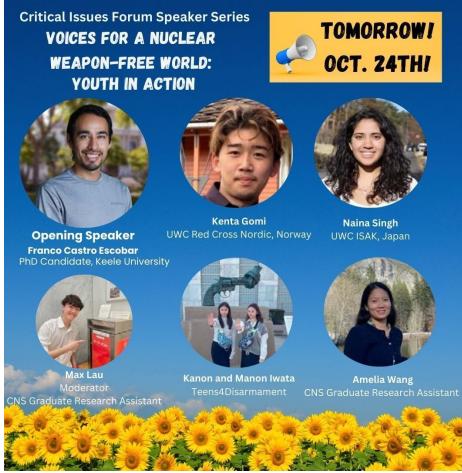
Three additional universities are in the pilot phase of collaboration. During the pilot period, the local Schools Abroad director and Projects for Peace staff work with the identified university liaison to support the establishment of the campus program. Additional Schools Abroad partner universities are in the discussion phase, and we hope to welcome them in 2027.

Pillar Four: Graduate Training and Research

Voices for a Nuclear Weapon-Free World: Youth in Action

On October 24, the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies (CNS) with the [Critical Issues Forum](#) (CIF) hosted an online Speaker Series event "Voices for a Nuclear Weapon-Free World: Youth in Action", with over thirty participants in attendance. The Critical Issues Forum (CIF) is a global education project that engages high school students in learning about disarmament and nonproliferation. CNS Senior Project Manager Masako Toki opened the event, framing the importance of youth engagement in disarmament education, and introduced the opening speaker Franco Castro Escobar.

Castro Escobar discussed his dissertation focused on youth antinuclear activism, highlighting that their work is "unfolding, uncharted, and increasingly consequential." The youth panel, moderated by CNS graduate research assistant and former Conflict Transformation Cohort Fellow Max Lau, included 4 speakers involved in Teens4Disarmament, Soka Institute for Global Solutions, advocacy in the United World Colleges system, and the Hiroshima-ICAN Academy. The speakers highlighted the role of education as a catalyst, youth as agents of change, global perspectives, and empathy and testimony. The event was a compelling example of integrating insights across regions and areas of expertise, in particular youth engagement around issues of social concern. More information about CIF and the event can be found [here](#).



Pillar Five: Global Engagement

The Tenryūmura History Project

Since 2016, Middlebury College has built a deep and enduring partnership with Tenryūmura—a small mountain village in Nagano Prefecture, Japan, known for both its resilience and challenges in relation to aging and depopulation. Over the past decade, hundreds of students, staff, faculty, and village partners have worked together on community-based projects focused on two themes: conflict transformation and global partnership for sustainability.

While rooted in the Middlebury School in Japan, this work has been integrated across the Middlebury institution, from the Center for Community Engagement and the Middlebury Institute to Middlebury's Global Partnership for Sustainability and the Japanese and Film & Media Culture departments at the College. Middlebury students, faculty, staff, and alums have all participated in this work.



Middlebury students, faculty, staff, and alum celebrate with residents of Tenryūmura

Pillar Five support for a short film to document the local partnership has been key to transforming these memories into new forms of dialogue – showing how storytelling and translation can bridge generations, promote healing, and deepen intercultural understanding. In 2024–2025, ["The History of Tenryūmura"](#) documentary was screened at Middlebury College, School in Japan partner institution International Christian University (ICU), and during the Tenryūmura Coming of Age Ceremony, coinciding with the village's WWII memorial. These screenings provided more opportunities for students, staff, faculty, and villagers to reflect and engage deeply with one another's communities.

Village historian Mr. Kawakami traveled to Vermont, deepening the shared commitment to remembrance and reconciliation and strengthening ties among the Middlebury, ICU, and Tenryūmura communities. This project is a compelling example of the role of integration in deepening relationships and impact across Middlebury and beyond.

RECENT AND UPCOMING EVENTS



On Friday, November 21, Irvine Auditorium was packed with local community members, and MIIS faculty, staff, and students. The event was to honor four local indigenous women leaders: Linda Yamane & Violet Smith of the Rumsen Ohlone Tribal Community and Cari Herthel and Jana Nason of the Esselen Tribe of Monterey County. This event included multiple aspects: the honoring ceremony and panel discussion as part of the Jan Knippers Black Memorial Fund and the screening of the film, "The Eternal Song" accompanied by a Q & A with the filmmakers, **Zaya & Maurizio Benazzo** and cinematographer **Caroline Campbell**. Some questions raised by the film are at the heart of conflict transformation: how do we acknowledge the wound and long-term impacts of colonialism on indigenous communities, find our voices in the collective story, and engage in healing and reconciliation?

UPCOMING EVENTS

- [Learning from Unplanned Teaching Moments: Critical Incident Analysis for Reflective and Impactful Pedagogies](#) - Winter Pedagogy Series, CTLR
 - 1.6.26 [Part 1](#)
 - 1.7.26 [Part 2](#)
- [Michael Rohd](#) Residency
 - 1.8.26 [Creative Approaches to Social Change Panel](#)
 - 1.9.26 [Creative Pedagogies for Social Change Workshop](#)

That's all... for now!

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