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McCutcheon, Sawatsky, & Smiths' "Voice of harmony and dissent: how peacebuilders are transforming their worlds" (book review)

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Book Review



McCutcheon, R., J. Sawatsky and V. Smith (Eds.). (2015). *Voices of harmony and dissent: how peacebuilders are transforming their worlds*. Winnipeg: CMU press. 351 pp. \$18.48 ISBN 9780920781261

Voices of harmony and dissent is a collection of stories authored by peacebuilders (or wise elders) based on courses they taught at the Canadian School of Peacebuilding (CSOP). CSOP provides intensive courses offered annually at Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg. Teachers at CSOP come from all over the world and include doctors, frontline peace practitioners, farmers, some from specific faith traditions, some with no faith affiliation (p. 19). The goal of this book is to “offer more broadly the kind of wisdom and learning found in the CSOP community” (p. 20).

Each author included in this book uses the “relationship approach to change” (p. 21). The situations and locations are different, but the process and goal are the same. Awad explains that division is powerful, with marked differences in cultural/religious groups, and it is encouraged by dictators. He wants “all peacebuilders to support justice” (p. 33). Marković describes reconciliation through music, in the success of Pontanima Choir singing music from both “sides” in Bosnia-Herzegovina (pp. 186–215). Entz discusses the problem of food wars, and the importance of fair and sustainable food production and distribution (pp. 103–128). Clark, Murphy and Huebner discuss advocacy and non-violent confrontation as a power for political and social change. All authors in the book stress the importance of doing something. This always includes listening and may include talking (resisting the urge to begin advocating immediately (Clark and Murphy p. 50)), require mediation (importance of including all parties (Dyck p. 70–102)), and require courage (Lakey p. 177). While not all authors in this book discuss religion as it relates to peacebuilding, several place a lot of importance on it. Khuankaew writes that before she studied “engaged Buddhism, [she] never knew there could be a connection between religion and social justice, between a spiritual life and an activist life” (p. 157). Huebner says Mennonite peace theology is no longer only anti-war, “it must encompass all of life” (p. 146). Matilpi (p. 216–236), McKay (p. 237–243), Meiring (p. 244–280), Pranis (p. 281–302) and Ridd (p. 303–332) share stories and practices of Indigenous people and discuss the process of reconciliation. Meiring compares the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) process in South Africa with the TRC in Canada.

This book fulfills the goal of libraries to include many perspectives both by its base in Canada and inclusion of authors from multiple countries. The Introduction (p. 19–

23) explains the background and goals of CSOP, setting the stage for understanding the vision of the book, and the school. The chapters are arranged in alphabetical order by author name, so no special emphasis is given to one idea, place, or method of peacebuilding.

Voices of harmony and dissent would be an excellent addition to any library, public or academic. The stories are readable, with footnotes and bibliographies included to support chapter content. Brief author biographies listed at the back of the book assist in understanding the setting, situation, and experience of each author. This book would augment other material on peacebuilding, with personal stories about journeys to peace from around the world.

Reviewer

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