

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE (August 20, 2008) CONTACT: Steve Olweean, 269-665-9393

Major International Conference in San Francisco Addresses Polarization, and Promotes Compassion, Understanding, and World Peace

'Engaging the Other: The Power of Compassion' - a four-day conference - is slated for September 4-7, 2008 **SAN MATEO, CALIFORNIA, U.S.A.**

- How much can the "common person" do to increase capacity for peace and compassion in a world where conflicts, violence, and war are widespread? Quite a bit, according to the people at the US-based Common Bond Institute (CBI), which is sponsoring a major annual international conference in San Mateo September 4th to 7th called "**Engaging the Other: The Power of Compassion.**" The four-day event, to be held at the San Mateo Marriott Hotel in San Mateo, California, is the 3rd in an ongoing series of conferences addressing this timely topic and is expected to attract several hundred participants from across the United States and around the world. Since it's inception, the ETO Conference has quickly grown as a venue for raising public awareness and stimulating proactive efforts. This year more than 65 presenters from various cultures, countries, and disciplines will be on hand to explore a broad range of pathways to enhance compassion, understanding, and peace - exploring "The Other" from psychological, social, cultural, spiritual, philosophical, political, economic, and ecological perspectives.

The conference emphasizes direct interaction by all who participate and aims to create a critical mass to promote wider public dialogue on concepts of "Us and Them"; address the roots of negative stereotyping, prejudice, and division that lead to conflict and violence; develop practical ways of bridging misunderstanding and distrust; and advance reconciliation, peace, and an appreciation of diversity, - locally and globally.

"This is a time of dramatic upheaval in the Middle East and other regions of the globe," said Steve Olweean, director of CBI and coordinator of the conference. "We're working to bring more of the public eye and wisdom to bear on both why and how people are polarized and often create demonic images of each other, whether they're looking across the world or across the street. In today's world, learning how to move past such artificial barriers to cultivate a shared consciousness of peace are simply practical survival skills for us all." CBI has organized international conferences on conflict resolution and humanitarian training projects in other countries for over 17 years, including Russia.

Registration is open all. Complete information about the program, registration, and fees are available online at **www.cbiworld.org**, Email at **SOlweean@aol.com**, or telephone at **269-665-9393**.

Featured at the conference will be an array of over 65 renowned presenters and authors, including individuals such as Huston Smith, Marianne Williamson, Maureen O'Hara, Hamza Yusuf, Geshe Gendun Gyatso, Bill Lockyer, Corinne McLaughlin, and Don Edward Beck.

Also scheduled are a number of roundtables, workshops, conference-wide facilitated group dialogues, interactive all-conference experiences, expressive arts interpretation of the conference, performances, and exhibits. In addition there will be Video addresses by US Congressman Dennis Kucinich and Costa Rican President Oscar Arias. A Buddhist Geshe along with monks accompanying him from India will create a Tibetan Buddhist sand mandala as a gift to the conference, and a special exhibit of Palestinian and Israeli children's art will launch it's national tour at the conference.

Key presenters and participants are gathering from many ethnic communities, including Asian-American, Arab-American, Jewish-American, African-American, Hispanic-American, and Native-American.

The event is a collaboration between Common Bond Institute, the International Humanistic Psychology Association, the Institute of Imaginal Studies, the Institute of Noetic Sciences, and more than 90 supporting universities and organizations around the world.

"A unique quality of this event is that it is not a passive, one-way experience." Olweean, says.

"Participants will experience the program, dialogues, and intentional multicultural community together as a living, learning laboratory intended to tap into our common wisdom and encourage practical application in our day to day relationships."

To help stimulate continued dialogue and collaboration, among the expected outcomes of these conferences are published results, recorded proceedings, linking the conference to a network of international conferences, media and art exhibits, and laying the groundwork for creating a working network of activists for cooperative peace studies and peace building initiatives, including generating public dialogue groups beyond the conference. An "Engaging The Other" training curriculum geared to the general public is also planned for the future.

Plans are already in the works for the fall 2009 4th ETO Conference, with invitations to host the conference within the next 3 years coming from various sources, including Costa Rican President Oscar Arias.

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