

WHAT HAPPENS  
WHEN 225 PEOPLE FROM 34 COUNTRIES  
COME TOGETHER TO TALK ABOUT OVERCOMING RACISM?



# Healing History

Overcoming Racism, Seeking Equity, Building Community  
July 3-7, 2013



*Building trust across the world's divides*

Initiatives of Change

INITIATIVES OF CHANGE CONFERENCE CENTRE  
CAUX, SWITZERLAND



Alex Wise (USA) and Lucelle Campbell (South Africa) talk before a morning plenary.

If God created the world, then God also created its diversity. So who are any of us to scorn or oppress people unlike us in skin color or other outward characteristics typically associated with race?

Fifty years ago, Dr. Martin Luther King dreamt that one day his children would not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character. Yet race still divides my country, the

United States. Recent anniversaries of the battle of Gettysburg and the March on Washington seemed to proclaim that we've made progress in living up to our ideals as a nation. Other events, such as the Supreme Court's Voting Rights decision and the acquittal of George Zimmerman in the death of Trayvon Martin, showed that racial healing and justice are still necessary.

As Americans contemplated our own history and present, we could have benefited from thinking about the transcendence of race as a global imperative. What might we learn from efforts to overcome racism and build healthy, inclusive communities in Africa, the Americas, Europe, the Middle East and Asia?

The search for such applicable insights and replicable solutions drove the design of the Healing History conference. For four days, 225 participants from 34 countries met at the Initiatives of Change international conference center in Caux. Participants arrived as interested individuals or groups hoping to learn from one another. Especially enriching the delegation were:

- representatives of four countries in the francophone Sahel region of Africa;
- members of the Roma culture from different parts of Europe;
- civil society leaders from the globe's newest country of South Sudan;
- leaders from 12 US states who are part of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation's racial equity initiative "America Healing";
- European human rights lawyers and repre-

sentatives of the "new" Europeans with roots in North Africa, South Asia and the Caribbean; and

- representatives of indigenous communities in Australia, Canada and the US involved in health and child welfare policy.

Goals for the conference expressed at the outset were to:

- better appreciate how discrimination damages societies economically, socially, morally, and spiritually;
- recognize usable approaches to address wounds of history;
- adopt new methodologies and strategies to change structures;
- promote policy-making built on trust; and
- form partnerships across traditional divides to lead a sustained movement for healing and equity.

We spoke our dreams, shared insights into the ways racism continues to harm individuals and societies and offered ideas of how best to transform our society, starting with ourselves. We made important, though incomplete, strides towards those goals, and emerged with a deeper sense of the many manifestations of racism within our world and the challenges of navigating ancient habits and ingrained stereotypes. We were also fired with inspiration by each other's stories and efforts.

Though this report cannot convey all the remarkable moments of wisdom and grace in the Healing History conference, we attempt to capture the spirit and the sense of hope that exists when we create exchanges of experience and perspective from around the world. In the midst of such a global challenge, several hundred people meeting on a mountainside seems small. But I am reminded of Quaker theologian Rufus Jones: "I pin my hopes to quiet processes and small circles, in which vital and transforming events take place."

*Alex Wise*

Alex Wise  
Board Chair  
Initiatives of Change USA





## A GLOBAL TASK FOR OUR GENERATION CONFRONTING THE FALLACY OF HUMAN HIERARCHY

The conference opened by inviting participants to consider what it means to carry Martin Luther King's dream of equality into the 21<sup>st</sup> century on a global scale. In the same space where Franco-German reconciliation took tentative first steps in the late 1940s, and where, in the decades since, people from all corners of the globe have come to exchange insight, understanding and concrete plans for a better future, participants from 34 countries shared their dreams.

### A DREAM FOR OUR GENERATION

"My dream," said keynote speaker Gail Christopher, (vice president for program strategy, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, US) "is that all children will grow up in a world that no longer clings to the mythology of the hierarchy of the human family: the fallacy that some of us are worth more than others. We have to eradicate that fallacy."

"Every country has felt the whiplash of racism," reflected **Rajmohan Gandhi** (India), grandson and biographer of Mahatma Gandhi. "There is no country that is wounded as much as India by the idea that my birth is better than yours."

Racism, Gandhi said, also has siblings such as "my religious belief is superior . . . my bullet



is superior. Such notions too call for treatment. No [one] can say that the idea of equality is only for other countries."

Noting the hope that some African Americans took from the Indian non-violent struggle for independence, Gandhi and others shared how confronting the fallacy of hierarchy in one

Lisa Jackson Pulver addresses the opening plenary of the conference as Alex Wise, Rob Corcoran, Gail Christopher, Doreen Lawrence and John Powell listen.

place can inspire others in another.

Alex Wise (US), a white Southerner from Memphis, Tennessee, whose ancestors once owned slaves, shared the impact of witnessing German efforts to tell the full history of the Holocaust. “It dawned on me that we needed this kind of honest conversation in my nation as well,” Wise said, explaining how he and others created a museum in Richmond, Virginia, the former capital of the Confederacy, which narrates the American Civil War from Union, Confederate and African American perspectives.

Now living in the city where Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated, Wise evoked King’s words that “hate cannot drive out hate, only love can do that.”

“My dream,” Wise shared, “is that we review

oceanic circle [where] the last would be equal to the first.”

### A DEEPLY ROOTED BIAS

Citing studies of implicit bias, John Powell (University of California – Berkeley, US) explained how socially created hierarchies shape our subconscious reactions to people, regardless of conscious beliefs. The human mind, Powell noted, processes around 40 million bits of information every second but we are conscious of only about 40. “Our unconscious minds create filters. We’re hardwired to have empathy, but we’re also hardwired to separate people into us and them,” Powell said.

This impulse to classify people became a destructive belief in racial hierarchy, noted Christopher, when 17<sup>th</sup> century Europeans extended the scientific classifications of animals to humans, applying stereotypes based on physical features and placing Europeans at the top of the hierarchy on a self-interested assumption of superiority.

Speaking in front of a map that showed the distribution of more than 300 distinct aboriginal cultures on the Australian continent, some which date back 60,000 years, Lisa Jackson Pulver (University of New South Wales, Australia), herself a person of aboriginal descent, noted the irony that European explorers arriving 200 years ago considered the land “*terra nullius*”, or unoccupied, because they did not view aboriginals as humans.

Over time the imposition of ideas about hierarchy has deep impact on our societies and our individual minds. “Think about someone who has a disability,” Powell said. “People don’t design structures [specifically] to keep out people in wheel chairs but many buildings do so. The structure [of society] is usually built with the dominant group in mind. When we see patterns of disparity again and again, it’s likely that unconscious bias is present.”

“What does overriding loyalty to humankind demand of us?”

Rajmohan Gandhi, India

Mercy Shahale and Catherine Mbenge, both from Kenya, were two of 23 Caux Scholars to participate in the conference. “My dream,” says Catherine, “is to have a united Kenya, different tribes living harmoniously together.”

Learn more about the [Caux Scholars Program](#).



our personal narratives to see if they align with Dr. King’s philosophy – to not be against people but for them.”

Likewise, Gandhi recalled his grandfather’s dream that humanity “will not be a pyramid with the top sustained by the bottom, but an





*In 1993, Stephen Lawrence was murdered. His mother's demand for justice changed England's awareness of race.*

### A MOTHER'S STORY

**Doreen Lawrence** (at left) shared her story with conference participants during a workshop on July 6th, explaining her efforts to find justice. In the months after Stephen's murder, no arrest was made and police shared no information with the family. "We were patronized by the police at every level of the investigation," Lawrence said. Only after a high profile meeting with Nelson Mandela were 5 men eventually arrested, though they were released shortly thereafter with no explanation.

Because of her repeated calls for justice, the government launched an inquiry which, when published in 1999 contained 70 recommendations and described the police as "institutionally racist." The report forced changes in society, from police training to how schools were required to treat racist incidents. And after 19 years, two of the five men were convicted for Stephen's murder.

To learn more visit the [Stephen Lawrence Trust](#) online.

### "RACIAL" DISPARITIES PERSIST

Jackson Pulver pointed to patterns of health disparity in Australia between Caucasians and Aboriginals as profound evidence of structural racism. Though average life expectancy in the country as a whole has grown steadily, she said, life expectancy for Aboriginal peoples is still what it was in the 1930s and 1940s.

"We could add tens of thousands of productive citizens to the economy."

**Algernon Austin**, Economic Policy Institute, USA

**David Williams** (Harvard University School of Public Health, US) drove the point home by sharing snapshots of health disparities between dominant groups and minorities in England, Wales and Australia. In the US, at every level of education attainment, blacks have a lower life expectancy than whites, a reality that has been calculated to cost the US economy \$309.3 billion each year.

Noting how disparities in criminal justice have economic costs for society as a whole, **Algernon Austin** (Economic Policy Institute, US) argued that "America's criminal justice

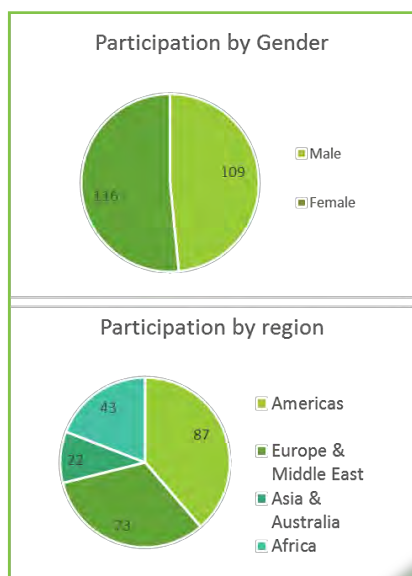
policies are not race neutral." While whites and blacks in the US use drugs at similar rates, blacks are four times more likely than whites to be arrested for marijuana use. If the US could lower incarceration rates, "we could add tens of thousands of productive citizens to the economy," Austin concluded.

Disparities likewise persist in Europe, including for members of the Roma community, said Ivan Ivanov (European Roma Information Office, Belgium). In the Czech Republic the Roma make up 70% of the students in schools for special needs, even though only 7-8% of Roma children have been diagnosed with special needs. This discrimination against children contributes to a cycle of poverty for Roma communities.

The impacts of racism are also felt by new immigrants in a society, said Tanya Gonzalez (City of Richmond, Virginia, US). "Nearly

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# A SNAPSHOT OF THOSE WHO GATHERED

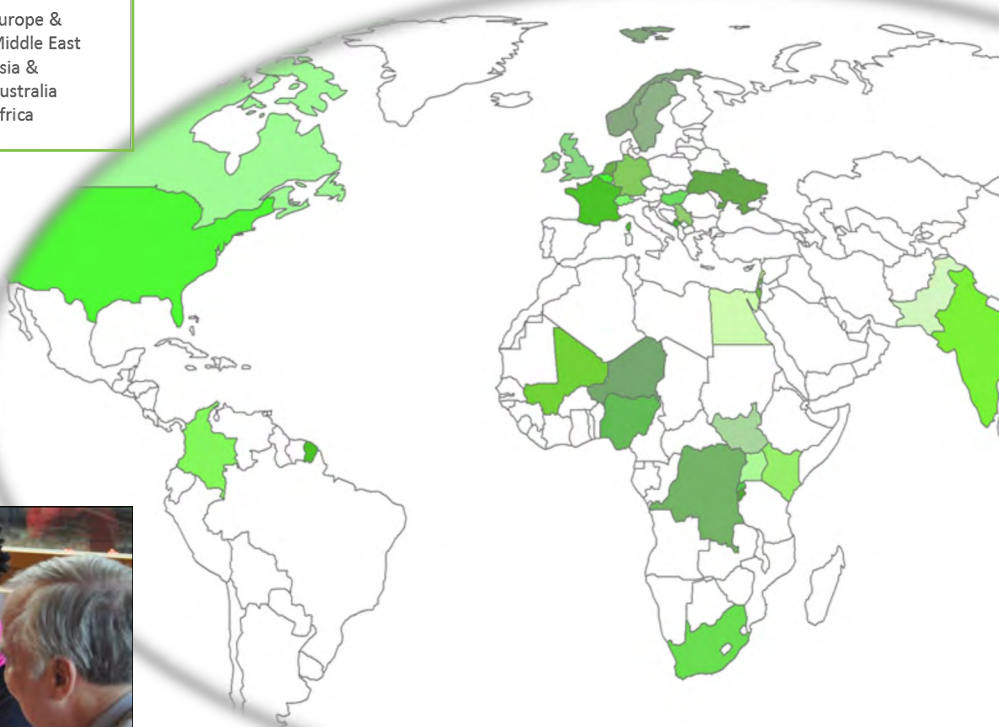


## AFRICA

**Participants:** 43

**Countries:** Burundi, Chad, Egypt, Kenya, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, South Africa, South Sudan, Uganda

**Languages Spoken:** Afrikaans, Arabic, Bambara, Dutch, English, French, German, Hausa, Kikuyu, Kinyarwanda, Kirundi, Kiswahili, Russian, Sotho, Swahili, Xhosa, Zulu



## THE AMERICAS

**Participants:** 87

**Countries:** Canada, Colombia, United States of America.

**Languages Spoken:** Arabic, English, French, German, Korean, Persian, Russian, Spanish, Urdu, Vietnamese, Yoruba



## EUROPE & MIDDLE EAST

**Participants:** 73

**Countries:** Belgium, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Lebanon, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Serbia and Montenegro, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, United Kingdom.

**Languages Spoken:** Arabic, Dutch, English, French, German, Hebrew, Hungarian, Italian, Kirundi, Kinyarwanda, Lingala, Maltese, Norwegian, Polish, Punjabi, Russian, Serbian, Somali, Spanish, Swahili, Swedish, Turkish, Ukrainian, Welsh







### ASIA & AUSTRALIA

**Participants:** 22

**Countries:** Australia, India, Malaysia, Pakistan

**Languages Spoken:** English, French, German, Hebrew, Hindi, Marathi, Panjabi, Sinhala, Tamil, Urdu



### THE SPIRIT OF CAUX

Caux is a place known for producing learning and change, both profound and mundane, through a combination of inspiring speeches, group discussions, practical service to each other and free time to build relationships.

Scott Morris (above), founder & CEO of the Church Health Center, Memphis, Tenn., US, shared in the concluding plenary a range of things he had learned in the four days:

- How to slice zucchini in order to serve 400 participants and conference volunteers.
- A better understanding of the World Bank.
- That the beautiful mansions of Bristol, RI were built on the backs of slaves.
- How to sort potatoes into large and small while talking about the politics of Quebec and learning folklore from the Ukraine.

“I go down [from here],” Morris concluded, “knowing that words do not solve problems but that daily justice and mercy are necessary.”

Visit [IofC online](#) to hear other’s thoughts on what they took away from the Healing History conference.



**Top left:** Marc Leyenberger (ECARI, France) addresses a plenary session of the conference. **Top Right:** Audience members. **Above:** Small group discussions in the main hall.

every day in my work I see a family who has been devastated by detention and deportation. Imagine being a child, going to school and not knowing whether your mom or dad will be there when you return.”

#### A CALL TO ACTION

Recognizing the shared costs of racism is only part of the journey. “What people really need is to have their dignity respected,” said Terry Cross (National Indian Child Welfare Association, US), stressing the need for action. “Yes, bad things have happened and we need to acknowledge that but if nothing changes your behavior you just have to apologize again.”

“We have never turned that belief system [in hierarchy] upside down. I believe that is the real work—to assert a system of common humanity.”

Gail Christopher, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, US

“What does overriding loyalty to humankind demand of us now?” Gandhi asked those gathered to consider, suggesting that religious extremism was a key challenge. “Who will work to heal the divide within the Muslim world? And if the divide between the Muslim world and Western world is so profound, with common people on both sides seeking a better future, is not there wisdom for this work in the heritage and experience of African Americans?”

In her keynote speech to the conference, Gail Christopher tied together the themes of personal healing and policy change. She underlined the importance of creating incentives for action and called for the creation of a global fund “for the healing of racism, [and] for healing from racism. All our speakers have addressed the consequences and effects of that belief system [in hierarchy]. But [as a global community] we have never turned that belief system upside down. I believe that is the real work - to assert a system of common humanity.”

#### WE REMEMBER STORIES

**Marc Leyenberger** (European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance, France) called for participants to engage in grassroots work and live out tolerance but also to remember that “true tolerance demands respect and dignity and this tolerance cannot tolerate the intolerable” damage of racism. “Demand





## *Telling History From All Sides*

### RICHMOND, US

Several breakout groups focused on the telling of history.

A diverse group of Richmonders described the impact of sustained work begun two decades ago to overcome the deep divisions in a city built on slavery and which was the epicenter of the American Civil War. Part of the impetus, said Ed Ayers (University of Richmond) was to say “let’s take the thing that divided us the most, look it in the face and see if we can use it to bring us together.”

This concerted effort to tell history honestly and from multiple perspectives, pioneered by Hope in the Cities, a program of Initiatives of Change, has significantly changed the public dialogue, though panelists were quick to stress the need for continued work.

“When you hear ‘Civil War’ in Richmond, black people don’t come,” said Christy Coleman (American Civil War Center). “But [at a recent celebration of Emancipation] about 25% of people who came were black folk. The community was learning about itself.”

Additional sessions explored the impact of telling history from different perspectives in South Africa and Ukraine and sparking conversation among a group of leaders from Chad about how to tell history after their civil war. Read more about Richmond’s ongoing journey of healing history in [Trustbuilding](#) and at the [Hope in the Cities](#) website.

that the laws in your country are actually applied, that the teachers are not afraid to tell the truth about history,” Leyenberger urged.

Ciraj Rassool (University of the Western Cape, South Africa) echoed the concept of moving beyond a simplistic goal of tolerance. “As we went through our very important and sometimes difficult conversations [in smaller groups] we realized that sometimes the notion of tolerance is inadequate – we don’t want to be tolerated. We don’t just want things to be the same and to be included in that sameness.”

Multiple speakers echoed the importance of telling history in more inclusive and discursive ways as a necessary step in overcoming racism. These comments opened discussions about the legitimate sources of authority in the process of co-creating our history, and the role of personal stories in that history.

“Sometimes the notion of tolerance is inadequate—we don’t just want things to be the same and to be included in that sameness.”

Ciraj Rassool, University of the Western Cape, South Africa

John Powell underlined the personal, psychological aspect of healing history. “We used to believe that we could eliminate stereotypes” by providing more accurate data, Powell noted, “but neuroscience argues this isn’t possible [if efforts only engage the conscious mind.] We have to learn to talk to the unconscious and it’s not interested in facts. It reads the environment, it reads patterns, it reads stories.”

### HISTORY - HONESTY AND HOPE

“History is not neutral,” said John W. Franklin (National Museum of African American History and Culture, US). “History has different points of view. These are taught to our children, seen in films, are told in museums all over the world.”

Noting that the day he was speaking, July 4th, was Independence Day in the U.S., Franklin observed that the celebrations of that day tra-



A working group discussion on the role of faith leaders in transforming racism was one of eighteen options available to conference participants.

## WORKING COMMUNITY

In addition to serving each other as part of a community group, participants selected from among a number of working groups on specific topics. Short summaries of many working group conversations are [available online](#).

- Dimensions of prejudice in Europe
- History of the Roma in Kosovo
- Expanding the narrative of colonialism
- Faith leaders transforming racism
- Human Trafficking
- Criminal Justice
- Immigration and citizenship
- Intergenerational multiracial organizing
- Learning from indigenous people
- Museums and public history sites
- Reflective practice - fostering a culture of learning
- Increasing the capacity of our communities to address racism together
- The psychology of privilege and oppression
- Residential and school segregation
- Social determinants of health
- Transformative power of the arts
- Understanding unconscious bias
- Walking through the history of the other

ditionally focused only on the country's liberation from England and ignored other parts of history. "We didn't talk about the killing of Native Americans, we didn't talk about slavery, we didn't talk about what happened to the Japanese in concentration camps."

Historians can contribute both "a full accounting of the wrongs done in history" and tell the stories "of injustice met and overcome," said **Ed Ayers**, (historian and president, University of Richmond, US). "A full history has twin strands of honesty and hope because humans possess both those traits. We owe [those that came before] the honor of hearing the lessons they might have for us. But we also owe them to make the most of the moment we live in, to redeem the past."

Mireille Fanon-Mendès-France (Frantz Fanon Foundation, France) noted that because race is a humanly created category, in challenging it, we can too easily confirm its power rather than undermine it. Taking actions that focus on the elimina-

tion of domination may be most helpful. "To move beyond racism," she said, "we have to engage the other in a critical dialogue that puts ourselves at risk. Anti-racism has to be a process of radical questioning that supplies a challenge to structures of power. Trust is its singular starting point."

Ciraj Rassool emphasized the link between the expression of inclusive history and other forms of reconciliation. History, he said, cannot only be a calling of historians because "reconciliation is not a condition that you attain. Reconciliation is a discourse, a way of understanding the story of society."

## NOT OUT OF GUILT

One powerful example of such a discourse through story came through the screening of the film "Traces of the Trade." The film documents the journey of descendants of the DeWolf family as they discover the extent to which the wealth of their ancestors in Bristol, Rhode Island came from the slave trade and then the actions that they took.

The co-producer of the film, Juanita Brown, shared about one DeWolf descendant's experience that, "when you open your heart it becomes very natural to want to make it right, not out of guilt, but out of grief." It's not about whether you are good or bad," Brown continued. "Our goodness is about our practice. If we can shift this narrative about goodness and badness and instead focus on awareness, things will begin to shift."

## BUILDING COMMUNITY

Several speakers identified ongoing and honest relationships as a key for building a discourse of reconciliation that speaks to both the conscious and the unconscious.

Creating space for relationship building was a key organizing concept for the conference. Participants signed up to be in one of six communities which served as a consistent group for deeper discussion each morning and as a group of colleagues for carrying out the volunteer work that is invited of every participant – washing dishes, serving tea, setting tables.



## HEALING HISTORY: OVERCOMING RACISM, SEEKING EQUITY, BUILDING COMMUNITY

“Being served by one another,” Jeanné Isler, a conference facilitator, told participants, “that’s something powerful and transforming – you understand each other at a deeper level, at a human level.”

### THE ECONOMICS OF CHANGE

“Someone who works is by definition a productive member of the economy,” argued **Dilip D’Souza**, a journalist from Mumbai, India as he recalled a story of Muslims in Gujarat being boycotted by members of other religious groups. “When you exclude someone from the economy, it’s yourself [who is harmed]. If we see the connection to our wallets, we may have a better chance to overcome racism.”

Our ability to address core issues of the global economy is key for overcoming racism, suggested **Marcello Palazzi** (Progressio Foundation, Netherlands). “In a civil society meeting like this, there is often a bias against business,” Palazzi noted. “Below racism is a question of access to resources and economic leadership. The world we live in is a global world in which people who were discriminated against in the past are now becoming successful entrepreneurs. [This is driving a shift toward] “business as unusual,” he said, with more than 10,000 companies building business models like B corporations with the purpose of not just making a profit but having a social impact. “The best strategy forward,” he told conference participants “is to embrace these changes and take the initiative.”

### A PLACE AT THE TABLE

**Mee Moua**, (Asian American Justice Center, US), noted the importance of being at the table when key decisions are made in society. Moua, who was the first member of the Hmong community to serve in the Minnesota legislature recalled a mentor, who told her “If you don’t make room for yourself at the table, you will be on the menu.” I remember those words [when] I’m able to divert some unintended consequences of some policy.”

“My core belief,” she continued, “is that change happens only when we have a place at the table and that we can only leverage our place at the table when we can demonstrate relevance and political power. When was the last time you thought about yourself occupying that seat or that space to provide that voice at the table?”

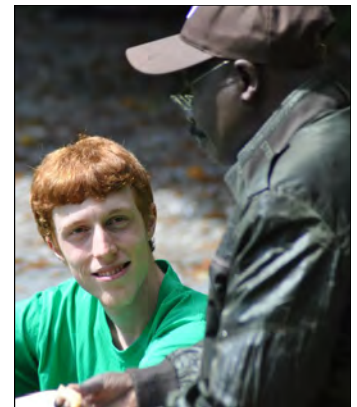
The challenge stuck with many participants, including Maxine May Cockett (UK), a community development worker. “There are people who tell me I need to move in [new] circles, but I’ve been

“When you exclude someone from the economy, it’s yourself [who is harmed].”

Dilip D’Souza, journalist, India

**Left:** Don King, Iva Carruthers, and Georgette Norman prepare tea and coffee service for conference participants. Each attendee was part of a community group for discussion and service.

**Below:** Tim Hall (Canada) and Bedan Mbugua (Kenya) converse on the patio during tea time.



Acuil Banggol (South Sudan) and Hassan Mohamud of Sweden/Somalia lead their community group in a cheer during the final plenary. Each community group reported on the insights gained from their daily discussions over the four days of the conference.

comfortable at the grassroots. [Mee Moua] said, she didn't want to be on nobody's menu. That went straight to my heart. When I go back [home] I need to go to a different table."

#### A GLOBAL NETWORK

While plenary sessions brought all participants together, many also described the breakout sessions as equally important for building global networks and credited the exchange of perspectives as deepening their understanding for confronting racism across cultures.

"You have a whole new brain trust, so to speak," said Lauren Hodge (Baltimore, MD). One group shared in the final plenary that a vision for an ongoing "African Alternative Leadership Forum" had formed from their daily discussions.

"What impacted me the most was that I was able to tell my story and it resonates with other stories," said Lucelle Campbell, a South African who directs Transcending History Tours, a project that leads people on walks through the slave history of Cape Town. The conference "opened up some wounds" and

encouraged her "to look at who I am at the end of the day. I'm already re-thinking my own stereotypes."

"Speakers challenged some of my assumptions about race and offered me new ways of thinking," echoed Dan Jones (chancellor, University of Mississippi). "The opportunity to interact with people from around the world provided new context and insight into the challenging issues in my own community."

"The strength of what happens here," suggested Ciraj Rasool in the final plenary, "is the connection between the deeper issues and the interpersonal process. If Caux is to be more than a program of personal growth, we need to find a way for that deep discussion about questioning hierarchy [to happen.] That is the challenge as we go down the mountain."

"Speakers challenged some of my assumptions about race and offered me new ways of thinking."

Dan Jones, chancellor,  
University of Mississippi

Usha Gandhi, Mireille Fanon-Mendès-France and Rajmohan Gandhi following the opening plenary or the conference.



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*Initiatives of Change is a diverse global movement of people committed to the transformation of society through change in human motives and behavior, starting with their own.*

**Report Editors:** Rob Corcoran, Grant Rissler, Margaret Smith  
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#### Online Resources

## LEARN MORE

**Video highlights** - see excerpts from plenaries and individual interviews, including the keynote address by Gail Christopher.

**Plenary Speakers** - access full texts of speeches or Power-point presentations including:

- Marc Leyenberger, European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), France
- US Rep. John Lewis' message delivered by communications director Brenda Jones, US
- John Powell, Haas Institute, UC Berkeley, US
- Rajmohan Gandhi, author, India
- Ed Ayers, University of Richmond, US

(Throughout the report, orange links are provided when a speaker's text is available in its entirety.)

Use the QR code at right to access a digital version of this report with embedded links or go to [us.iofc.org/healing-history](http://us.iofc.org/healing-history).

