

Round Table „Peace“ at DKG International Covention in Indianapolis 2014 - A Curriculum of Hope for a Peaceful World

Having been in contact with Jeanne Morascini ever since we first met in Louisville, Kentucky in the early 90s and participating in the round table today, I would like to make a few statements.

Though I had nothing to do with the happenings because of the „mercy of the late birth“ as a former chancellor of Germany liked to say, I still feel humbleness when in foreign countries I am greeted with kindness, welcomed with generosity and so you will not be surprised I when I say that being a teacher in Germany has always implied the responsibility to let my students know what happened in WWII, trying to answer the question why it happened in order to implant into them the will that nothing like this should ever happen again.

My country caused the darkest times not only to Europe but to the whole world. The reason why I would like to express my feelings of gratitude is connected with these most terrible things which started 81 years ago in a territory which later became my country. When De Gaulle and Adenauer shook hands across Verdun and started the French-German friendship program in existence until to day, I was among the first students to take part in that program.

Friendship across borders has in some way to do with creating a peaceful world. It is my professional and personal motto.

Luckily we can say today, that there is peace in the Western hemisphere. The European Union is an example of how it may work out. Only a few years after WII the French minister Schumann offered Germany a union for coal and steel, the Montan Union was founded and from there The Union underwent several stages with different names and member countries until today 27 countries speaking 23 languages are the members of the EU. And the union is still developing. You know about the discussions that are underway.

And the main idea behind the process of a united Europe is a statement uttered by Winston Churchill „Never again War“. After WWII Germany could have been expelt by the allies who were able to stop the war, and as Richard von Weizsäcker stated: rescued the German people from a regime under dictatorship which I do not need to explain. Instead hands were extended to a peaceful coexistence.

As I was lucky to be born in the Western part of the divided Germany, I always say that the German-American liaison which can now be considered a friendship allowed us to strive and to become a true democracy – simply because the Marshall plan laid the foundation.

After the unexpected chance to reunite the two German states, Germany promised herself to Europe, Germany promised an awareness of the important role as peace keeper. More Europe does not mean more German Europe as some countries may think, moreover it means a European Germany in its best sense.

Our young people grow now up in a Europe together with 500 million people in peace. Looking at European history this is an amazing progress. Despite the problems the EU faces because of the happenings in Ukraine and the markets that are global players, .Europe wants to be a part of the world where peace amongst all states is significant.

Throughout my life it has always been a pleasure to meet with people from other countries and I am blessed with numerous close friendships which have developed over the years.

And I am proud of an exchange programme between my school and a highschool in Plattsburgh, upstate NY, which I initiated in 1986, made possible through friendship across borders, and still in existence.

At my school Peace has always been interwoven within the curriculum. Teaching students about the History plays a significant role and especially the Nazi regime and WWII have been part of the curriculum since the late 40s. From 5th to 12th grade teachers can choose texts, I have always preferred to read texts and books that deal with history and especially the recent one. For many years now an extra-curricular group named „AG für den Frieden“, in English „Group work for Peace“ has been working towards peace. Pupils from 9th to 12th grade are invited to join. They prepare panel discussions on numerous topics like Holocaust, Sinti and Roma, migration, discrimination etc. Politicians and historians are invited to talk and discuss with the students. There are always changing displays at school informing students about the happenings in the world and what needs to be done for a peaceful world. Our school has been awarded as „School Against Racism“.

Furthermore each year there is competition, initiated by History teachers, the theme always deals with peace and all students are asked to participate.

I always had participated in what is called a project week, students can choose a topic they want to work with. I brought two folders which years ago my little 5th graders did on peace.

Regarding the work of the committee who invited us to this round table, I would like to express my gratitude and admiration for the commitment the members show, especially your founder Jeanne Morascini. I have used many of your ideas in my classroom. Even in English, my lower grade students came up with brilliant poems about a peaceful world.

In his book „Power of Vision“ Joel A. Baker quotes :

„Vision without action is merely a dream. Action without vision just passes the time.
Vision with action can change the world.“

The vision must be both strategic, and ambitious, because it is what is needed to inspire commitment and action.

The founder and members of the committee „Curriculum of Hope for a Peaceful World“ have been having a vision for so many years. Your vision has been strategic and ambitious and has inspired commitment and action and thus your vision is changing the world of teaching for many teachers and students.

Commitment is the key word to strengthen our society. And for me this implies the commitment to reach out to friendship across all borders and by doing so work for a peaceful world.