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From the Director (Continued from Page 3)

The materials in this *Newsletter* highlight the work we are doing at PARC. With support of the Wilson Foundation PARC associates are currently engaged in an oral history project that links the social sciences, humanities and our local community. This project promises to benefit our understanding of how an active citizenry pursues local social justice issues. Next semester, with the support of the United States Institute of Peace, we will begin a project at PARC to explore the mutual recognition of harms and the kinds of moral compensation that will be necessary for an enduring peace between Palestinians and Israelis.

As always we will do all that we can to facilitate the participation in that work by members of our university and local communities and from others who wish to join with us.

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Robert A. Rubinstein

Professor of Anthropology and of International Relations

The September 11th tragedy changed the way most of us view the world. The lives of those who lost loved-ones and friends, or who worked in the heroic efforts to evacuate and then recover from the violent acts of that day, are irrevocably changed. Yet, the underlying problems driving conflicts remain much the same. Our agenda in the field of conflict resolution must address this reality with a new sense of urgency.

The changes taking place following 11 September are largely changes in the way people frame their worlds. This "world-view" change is far from trivial. Indeed, our dispute resolution theories focus predominantly on the shifting cognitive and affective meanings of conflict for all parties in the settlement of disputes. The critical challenge for the conflict resolution community is to foster dispute resolutions that lead to constructive, mutually beneficial gains. We have ample evidence that to frame conflicts in ways that support short-term, but inequitable goals, can lead to simmering resentment and horrendous long-term effects. As we work together in the near future, it will be important for the conflict resolution community to make explicit the frames that support dialogue and public conversations, rather than those, which foster suspicion and "groupthink."

We need to consider also the distinction between just and efficient settlements. The immediate aftermath of 11 September brought a renewed focus on structural inequalities that lead to frustration and resentment around the world. Some of these inequalities result, I believe, from the application of conflict resolution techniques that prioritize efficient settlements that serve business and government interests (and suppress the weak by more powerful forces in their societies), at the expense of just resolutions. This recognition obliges us to consider the moral and ethical aspects of our theory and of our practice, as well as its efficacy.

It is striking, and perhaps a bit frightening, how quickly following 11 September lines were drawn and thinking became polarized. Good versus Evil, modern versus traditional, patriot versus traitor, and faithful versus infidel are among the many dichotomies that now cleave our world. We know that such stereotyping can lead easily to the dehumanization of people and can serve to authorize violence. Indeed, hate crimes against those perceived to be of Muslim background in the United States and the abrogation of civil liberties are two sides of a troubling process. The conflict resolution field can contribute greatly to breaking down the drive to classify and dehumanize as an avenue for pursuing conflicts.

Just as frames set the broad outlines of understanding that shape ideas about what is possible and legitimate, how we speak about conflicts shapes our understanding of the particular events that we experience. In this area too, the events of 11 September challenge our field of social conflict studies to develop the theoretical understandings and practical methods for ensuring that the language of civil discourse opens possibilities for constructive rather than destructive approaches to social conflicts.

At PARC we are engaging these and other questions through the work of our associates and affiliates. We have revised our organizational structure, based on the experiences of the past four years. Our work now focuses on four streams: International Conflicts and their Management; Applied Dispute Resolution and Conflict Management; Social Movements and Strategies of Conflict; and Environment, Public Participation and Conflict Studies.

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