

Global Perspectives on Peace

9-18-19
Ellen Miller

Ellen Miller is a graduate student in the [International Education Development Program](#) of Penn's Graduate School of Education.

This week, Philadelphia marked International Peace Day with a series of events, including a panel discussion at the University of Pennsylvania. While the word “peace-building” often evokes images of ending a violent conflicts outside the U.S., the panel also focused on building peace in the U.S. within and between our many diverse communities.

Panelists Carly Rose Pourzand, MSW (Community Engagement Program Specialist, Penn State Center), Rupa Pillai, Ph.D. (Senior Lecturer, Asian American Studies Program, UPenn) and Nyamal “Mal” Tutdeal, MA (Executive Director of NyaEden Foundation, Inc) shared their definitions of peacebuilding and wove their work with various communities in and outside the U.S. into the discussion. Full bios of the speakers [here](#).

Pourzand, Pillai and Tutdeal spoke about the significance of the 2020 [US Census](#) and the fact that the citizenship question will not appear on the census. The census helps determine how billions of dollars in funding are distributed in communities around the country. Refugee and immigrant communities may be fearful of responding to the census due to rhetoric, threats and trauma. “It is crucial we use the upcoming census as a peace building tool so that our communities are counted and resources are allocated,” the panel asserted. Language barriers and fear of ICE were noted as some of the biggest barriers to peace in communities as well as poverty, racism, and colonial mindsets.

Tutdeal shared her lived experience being born in a refugee camp in Ethiopia and later emigrating to the US, where she had to again navigate a different cultural context. Now the founder of a nonprofit that benefits her home community of South Sudan, she describes herself as a person of three cultures. Tutdeal has advocated on Capitol Hill for policies that are pro-peace, recently on World Refugee Day, sitting down with lawmakers to share her personal story of being a refugee. She noted the significance of storytelling; lawmakers will remember her as they review facts and statistics.

Other examples of pro-peace work that were discussed include grassroots organizing, civil disobedience, celebrating cultures, intimate group dialogue, supporting public health initiatives, voter registration, education, and building coalitions across cultures, across the nation and across borders. In closing, Tutdeal shared that it is her own story that gives her hope in times of conflict and negative rhetoric.

“Global Perspectives on Pro-peace Policies, Programs and Placemaking” was part of the graduate class International Social Policy & Social Work: Perspectives from the Global South, taught by Anastasia Shown. The panel, attended by 65 people, was supported by a [Perry World House Course Enrichment Grant](#) to make classes more policy-relevant by supporting guest speakers, case studies and creative connections to the policy world. The event was co-sponsored by [Peace Day Philly](#), the [United Nations Association of Greater Philadelphia](#) and the [Global Philly Expo](#).