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Uyghur Meditative Retreat

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Table of Contents

ESSAY ONE: CONTEXTUALIZATION	6
Contextualization and Program Implementation	7
<i>Planners and Searchers</i>	<i>10</i>
Contextualization and Washington D.C.	11
<i>IRF Summit</i>	<i>14</i>
Contextualization and the Project	14
Contextualization and Creativity	16
Contextualization and My Future Vocation	16
Conclusion	17
Works Cited	19
ESSAY TWO: QUALITATIVE INQUIRY	20
Qualitative Inquiry vs. Quantitative Data	20
Action Research	22
Appreciative Inquiry	24
Qualitative Inquiry and Washington D.C. Fieldwork	25
Qualitative Methods and the Project	27
Conclusion	27
Works Cited	29
ESSAY THREE: ICD VALUES.....	30

Personal Transformation	30
<i>Letting go of Societal Expectations</i>	31
<i>Finding Myself</i>	32
Social Justice	32
Copowerment and Future Vocation	35
Theology Development and Future Vocation	36
Conclusion	37
Works Cited	38
APPENDIX	39
Project Proposal	39
Introduction	40
Uyghur Genocide: Historical Context	41
<i>Becoming a Genocide</i>	41
<i>The Genocide Today</i>	43
Seeking a Need	45
<i>Speaking with the Victims</i>	47
<i>Uyghur Mental Health</i>	49
Benefits of Meditative Retreats	50
<i>Retreats and Therapy</i>	50
<i>Uyghur Healing Through Retreats</i>	52

Project Synopsis 53

Project Objective..... 53

Project Implementation..... 54

Project Location..... 54

Project Beneficiaries 55

Project Activities 55

Project Itinerary..... 56

Project Evaluation and Monitoring..... 58

Estimated Project Budget..... 60

Works Cited 62

A Roadmap for the Uyghur Genocide 64

Introduction..... 65

Peacemakers 65

Catalytic Events 67

Realization 68

Identification 69

Preparation..... 70

Activation..... 71

Conclusion 72

Works Cited 74

COMPREHENSIVE WORKS CITED.....76

ESSAY ONE: CONTEXTUALIZATION

Contextualization is the foundation on which community development stands. The International Community Development (ICD) program at Northwest University preaches contextualization as the key to understanding other cultures and people. Program founder Forrest Inslee described cultural contextualization as "the practice of designing programs and processes with attention to the particular cultural characteristics and inherent resources of a given people, place and time." The history of community development has repeatedly shown that programs implemented with contextualization are far more successful and sustainable. To achieve sustainable solutions, community developers must become insiders in the communities they work with through the process of contextualization.

Contextualization is a process of respecting and appreciating different cultures for their unique humanness. Salter McNeil states:

Cultural difference and diversity was always a part of God's original plan for human beings. When God commanded the first human beings to 'fill the earth,' it was a decree to create cultures, because no one culture, people or language can adequately reflect the splendor of God. (28)

Humanity was created to be a diverse people, and contextualization must be considered to interact with any given people appropriately. I have personally always valued people and different cultures and thought that humanity's uniqueness is its greatest asset. However, the ICD program has dramatically enhanced my understanding of contextualization and what it truly means to understand and help another group of people. Contextualization requires that a community developer immerses themselves in communities. Building relationships is a vital component, allowing developers to understand an issue from the inside and not just from an

outsider's perspective. Becoming an insider and gaining context is the precursor to developing a co-created solution that will sustainability serve all stakeholders.

Communities need to be a part of their own solutions, and for that to occur, developers must build trust and relationships. Additionally, building relationships and becoming an insider ensures that community developers seek the truth of a situation rather than project their assumptions and preconceptions onto an issue. I completed my fieldwork research in Washington D.C. at the International Religious Freedom Summit (IRF). The greater Washington D.C. area is home to the largest concentration of Uyghurs in the United States, and the IRF Summit was attended by the most active Uyghur human rights organizations. Before attending the IRF Summit, I had placed much focus on my project on the racial and ethnic cleansing of Uyghurs. Due to my passion for issues of race and ethnicity, I was confident that my fieldwork in Washington D.C. would lead me to such a project. However, that changed after spending time with the Uyghur community and hearing their stories. Throughout my fieldwork, I watched Uyghurs and victims of the genocide give powerful accounts of their experiences. None of them could deliver their speeches without an outpouring of extreme emotion and tears. I, too, was moved to tears by every horrifying story that I heard (Bluher). It was clear to me through interviews and observations just how traumatized the victims of the genocide are. Becoming an insider helped clarify that a project centered around Uyghur mental health would be far more beneficial than one focused on ethnic cleansing.

Contextualization and Program Implementation

Successful program implementation is dependent on contextualization. Experts in project management assert how vital it is to understand those you work with. The Project DPro Guide, one of the most prominent resources for project managers in community development, states,

"Project implantation is often managed through a complex array of stakeholder relationships" (18). Without these relationships, projects are unlikely to see sustainable success. Donors should be kept appraised on how a project is performing to maintain project funding relations, and donors deserve to have accurate reporting given to them. Accurate reporting requires that projects maintain active fluid ties within the community they work with. All of this is dependent upon contextualization and a foundation of understanding between the project and those that the project aims to serve.

Aid without contextualization often leads to failure or can make matters worse. Abuzied states, "Evidence demonstrates that aid can and does directly strengthen existing corruption patterns in contexts where high levels of corruption are already rampant" (18). Simply giving aid to a community can backfire. Community developers must listen to a community and hear the needs that the community is asking for. Otherwise, aid can and often will be taken advantage of by those in power and does little to help those in need. Abuzied states further:

For example, World Bank calculations show that if theoretical models had predicted correctly, foreign aid transfers to Zambia, which began in the 1960s, would have by today pushed per-captia income to over \$20,000. In practice, however, Zambian income per capita has stagnated at around \$600 for years. This provides a stark example of the failures of foreign aid in Sub-Saharan Africa. (17)

These failures of foreign aid are primarily due to trying to "throw money at the problem" without understanding the unique contexts of those living in impoverished communities. Had contextualization in these situations been appropriately addressed and implemented, the given aid likely would not have gone to waste. There are examples in which directly giving money to a community has been successful because those circumstances were contextualized. One such

example was the Mozambique flood of 2000. Mozambique was devastated by a flood, and USAID provided cash grants to rural families affected by the flood. Surveys showed that 18 percent of the grants was spent on household good, 12 percent on clothes, 7 percent on food, 14 percent on livestock, 8 percent on seeds, 4 percent on farm equipment and 9 percent on construction materials (Hanlon 379). This grant money led to recovery and development for the flood victims, most of which were already living in poverty before the flood. The grants proved to boost the Mozambique economy, "Interviews and retailers suggested that as much as half the money was spent on goods produced within Mozambique. Thus, the grants seem to have stimulated both the local and the national economy" (379). In this instance, giving money directly to the poor proved to be an effective strategy when contextualized. The following is a solid explanation for why this strategy was effective when used contextually:

Meghnad Desai comments that "I would love to think that if we could give money – perhaps not to governments but directly to the citizens of poor countries – it could somehow enable them to make their own effort to get out of poverty. We are not giving enough attention to how poor people get themselves out of poverty. We always assume that we must do it for them." (qtd. In Hanlon 382)

Community development is a collaborative effort. It requires both parties, the project, and the community, to engage in best practices together. As Abuzied points out, "As such, efforts are best catered to strengthening local civil society, and empowering people by helping [them] learn how to help themselves" (22). Contextualization requires that we spend time searching for the correct answers.

Planners and Searchers

Many wish to eradicate poverty in one fell swoop. The public often asserts that the likes of Jeff Bezos could wake up one day and end world poverty. The unfortunate truth is that even if Jeff Bezos planned to do such a thing, it would likely fail. When someone creates an all-encompassing plan to end poverty, contextualization is lost. Sustainable development must be contextualized. Those who plan to end poverty, according to Easterly, are called "Planners," and those who search for the truth through relationship building and contextualization are called "Searchers". He states, "Planners apply global blueprints; Searchers adapt to local conditions. Planners at the top lack knowledge of the bottom; Searchers find out what the reality is at the bottom. Planners never hear whether the planned got what it needed; Searchers find out if the customer is satisfied" (6). Community developers must be Searchers. Whereas the outsider perspectives of a Planner will typically lack contextualization, a Searcher becomes an insider in the places they aim to develop. Being a Searcher allows for building relationships and communication that help projects be sustainable over time. A Planner's project may be successful for a short period, but history shows that noncontextualized projects will not be sustainable. Easterly explains further:

A Planner thinks he already knows the answers; he thinks of poverty as a technical engineering problem that his answers will solve. A Searcher admits he doesn't know the answers in advance; he believes that poverty is a complicated triangle of political, social, historical, institutional, and technological factors. A Searcher hopes to find answers to individual problems only by trial and error experimentation. A Planner believes outsiders know enough to impose solutions. A Searcher believes only insiders have enough knowledge to find solutions, and that most solutions must be homegrown. (6)

Before I went to Washington D.C. and the IRF Summit to conduct my fieldwork, I had some preconceived ideas about my project. I would not go so far as to say that I was a Planner, but I thought that my ideas would unquestionably be affirmed when I began my fieldwork. I was wrong. Shortly after my fieldwork began, I started searching for a new project. I dropped the idea of seeking racial reconciliation and turned my attention toward mental health.

Contextualization and Washington D.C.

The International Religious Freedom Summit was a humbling experience. Global humanitarian nonprofit organizations gathered to discuss issues of religious persecution and humanitarian crises. ChinaAid graciously sponsored me, a prominent nonprofit organization focused on issues of religious persecution in China. ChinaAid helps expose the humanitarian crimes committed by the Chinese Communist Party and helps those facing persecution escape. In many ways, ChinaAid has become the modern-day underground railroad. I was introduced to ChinaAid through Northwest University professor Bill Clark. Bill Clark has worked in partnership with ChinaAid as a part of the Uyghur Wellness Initiative, a program that eventually inspired my project. One of the primary focuses of ChinaAid is the ongoing genocide of the Uyghurs in the Xinjiang region of China. When I arrived in Washington D.C., ChinaAid had just recently rescued a woman, Gulzira, from one of the Xinjiang forced labor camps. As a member of ChinaAid's delegation, I attended meetings with U.S. government bodies like the National Security Council and listened to Gulzira's testimonies. Her stories are harrowing. The following is an excerpt from my fieldwork notes:

7/14/21

This morning, we met with the National Security Council to hear the testimonies of some of the victims. This meeting made me feel confident that there are people in our

government who are capable of making real positive change happen. They were extremely attentive, especially Elnigar Iltebir. Elnigar hugged Gulzira for a long time before the meeting began, and she was extremely kind to Gulzira and everyone else in the room. Unlike some of the other meetings that we have had, Elnigar and the other NSC agent asked many follow-up questions to get a better understanding of what they could do to help the situation. They asked things like “do you feel safe in the USA” and were very concerned by some of the answers given by the victims. This was an empowering meeting where I felt like what we were doing was making a true difference. The pain that I could see in Gulzira’s eyes as she recounted her story to the National Security Council was something that I will never forget for as long as I live. (Bluher)

Speaking with Gulzira and other victims of the genocide opened my eyes. I met people who had seen and endured horrific crimes against humanity. Specifically, Gulzira shared experiences of only being given two minutes to use the bathroom at any given time. If they were in the toilet room any longer, they would be tortured with electric batons (Gulzira).



Figure 1

Concentration camp survivor Gulzira (left) is reunited with her friend (right) at the International Religious Freedom Summit.

Photo: David Bluher

Initially, one of my ideas for a project before starting my fieldwork was to investigate the significance that race and ethnicity played in the suffering of the Uyghur people. As I listened and spoke with the Uyghur community, the less such a project seemed to matter. With my eyes and ears open, my time with ChinaAid showed me what the Uyghur community was going through. This context allowed me to realize just how much Uyghurs worldwide were suffering. This experience helped narrow my search toward a project that could provide more immediate relief to the mental anguish they are enduring.

IRF Summit

Immersing myself in the Uyghur community during the IRF Summit gave me a holistic view of what the Uyghur diaspora was going through. I spoke with organizations like the Uyghur World Congress, Uyghur Human Rights Project, and Campaign for Uyghurs. All of these organizations asserted how challenging the current situation is. Uyghurs are unsure whether or not their family members back in China are alive or dead because many have disappeared and have not been heard from in years. The silence from loved ones is challenging for Uyghurs, as many cannot get any closure. Listening to the Uyghur community allowed me to understand their plight from their perspective, not mine. The most worthwhile project that I could create to help the Uyghur people needed to be something practical. Building relationships with the Uyghur people in Washington D.C. allowed me to co-create a project with their suggestions; a mediative retreat to help the Uyghur people recover and heal.

Contextualization and the Project

My project, a meditative and spiritual retreat for members of the Uyghur diaspora, was built with contextualization. Uyghurs need an escape, a focused retreat away from their worries of deportation back to China. Several countries, like Egypt, have been arresting Uyghurs and

sending them to China to be put into concentration camps. A meditative retreat would help alleviate this stress. Kathrine Pershey, a U.K. woman who was skeptical about the effectiveness of meditative retreats, shares her experience after her therapist recommended a meditative retreat: “Something shifted in me that day. I drove home in a state of bewilderment. Somehow, by the wisdom of my psychiatrist and the provision of God, I’d conjured up my spiritual experience. I am easing my way out of the clutches of misery. God is here, and I am loved” (13). Meditative retreats are an effective method for healing from trauma, and the Uyghur community has been experiencing many traumas in light of the genocide. Guided retreats are proven to be more beneficial than a causal vacation, which is why the project has been designed to incorporate group meditation sessions. These sessions will provide mental health services to Uyghurs and allow them to connect with each other. Building relationships through shared trauma can be a powerful way to build community. Sue Topalin, who created a meditative retreat project in Spain centered around dance, reported:

The retreat positively affected participants’ connection with others, in terms of experiencing a sense of oneness and safety with others; developing trust; being able to be authentically themselves in a group; having fun and playing together; accessing a sense of beauty in their group movement; and gaining additional insight into their reactions in relationship. (96)

Additionally, providing mental health services ensures that the participants are not stigmatized for receiving mental health services. Uyghur culture has traditional viewpoints regarding mental health, especially among men. Seeking mental health services can be seen as weak (Ildikó Bellér-Hann). A meditative retreat respects Uyghur culture while still providing the participants with therapy. The first retreat of the project would be planned for Antalya, Turkey. Turkey has

one of the largest demographics of Uyghurs living outside of China, and conducting the retreat in Antalya would help reduce travel time for the participants.

Contextualization and Creativity

Creativity is an essential component of contextualization. To find creative and innovative solutions often requires that we have built strong relationships with the client. Kelley and Kelley state, "New opportunities for innovation open up when you start the creative problem-solving process with empathy toward your target audience – whether it's kids or colleagues, clients or consumers" (18). I felt much empathy for the Uyghur people and what they are going through, and it inspired me to create a project that would help. When contextualized and focused, kindness and compassion can spark innovative ideas to create unique solutions. I teach high school English because it is the most open-ended major school subject. Most school subjects like math, science, and even history ask students to find a precise answer. Rather than a fixed model solution, the context that I gained through my fieldwork allowed me to develop a creative solution for a Uyghur-specific mediative retreat. Community development needs creative thinking. Kelley and Kelley explain, "Those subjects emphasize a way of thinking and problem solving that have a clear-cut single right answer, while many real-world twenty-first century challenges require more open-minded approaches" (55). Every community and culture is unique and deserving of creative and contextualized solutions to achieve their potential.

Contextualization and My Future Vocation

Community developers must always strive to have a holistic viewpoint of the world and any given context. We are all unique and must respect each other's viewpoints, beliefs, traditions, heritage, and hopes. There is no universal approach to community development, and if there were, poverty would already be a thing of the past. Building relationships and creating

copowerment (mutual empowerment) is at the heart of being a community development practitioner. Hofstede states:

Values are implicit: they belong to the invisible software of our minds. Talking about our own values is difficult because it implies questioning our motives, emotions, and taboos. Our own culture is to us like the air we breathe, while another culture is like water – and it takes special skills to be able to survive in both elements. (23)

As a teacher, building relationships with students is a vital part of my profession. Students are unique and require contextualized lessons; not all teaching styles work for all students. I have a lot of empathy and compassion for others, and I am passionate about using these qualities for the greater good. This is why I joined the MAICD program at Northwest University. Teaching is rewarding, but I desire to go out into the world and engage in development. I crave a life of qualitative research, building relationships, and using my gift of empathy to develop creative solutions to unique problems. During my tenure as a student in the MAICD program, I took the Disaster Relief course. Disaster is a vocation that speaks to me. Creating relationships with communities and developing unique solutions to disasters, both as a preventative measure and post-disaster, is something that I would thrive in. Alternatively, my future vocation could involve using my skills as an English teacher in development projects. Either way, contextualization will be at the heart of my future vocation.

Conclusion

Contextualization is the heart and soul of community development. Understanding and trust are essential prerequisites for projects and development. The goal of community development practitioners should be to co-create a better future with their clients by implementing creative

solutions. There is no precise answer for development; it must be searched for through building relationships and understanding context.

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ESSAY TWO: QUALITATIVE INQUIRY

Qualitative inquiry is a necessary component of community development. If contextualization is the heart and soul of community development, qualitative inquiry would be the eyes and ears. Qualitative inquiry allows community development practitioners to gain a holistic understanding of a given context or situation. Stories are valid data points, and they are precious in understanding how to find sustainable solutions and benefit all. Merriam and Tisdell write, “Basically, qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world” (15). Those experiences are vital to the whole picture. The human experience cannot be quantified through statistics alone. Qualitative research methods are an essential tool for the community development practitioner. These methods include interviews, storytelling, observations, participation, surveys, and note-taking. Community developers can search for the truth through qualitative methods like action research by listening to those who know the issue best. In order for community developers to truly contextualize an issue and find a creative solution that is equitable and sustainable, qualitative research must be used in the research process. In this essay on qualitative inquiry, I will explain the importance of action research and appreciative inquiry and how they shaped my project.

Qualitative Inquiry vs. Quantitative Data

Research methods vary across different fields, but qualitative inquiry is necessary for community development. Statistics and facts can only paint half of the picture of a given situation. Merriam and Tisdell state, “Rather than determining cause and effect, predicting or describing the distribution of some attribute among a population, we might be interested in uncovering the meaning of a phenomenon for those involved” (5). Community developers must always consider

the context of a situation. Quantitative research can give a birds-eye view of a problem, but finding a sustainable solution requires immersion into the community. In his ethnography *Fresh Fruit, Broken Bodies*, Seth Holmes explains the importance of separating quantitative research from qualitative research through participatory observation. He states, “Instead, we perform participant observation over the *longue durée*, gaining field data from observations of and embodied participation in the conversations and activities of everyday life” (32). Quantitative researchers might see a correlation in their data and consider that to be the reality of a situation, despite never actually seeing the situation with their own eyes. A positivist orientation “assumes that reality is ‘out there’ and that it is observable, stable, and measurable” (Merriam & Tisdell 9). Seth Holmes demonstrates in his ethnography how stories can provide powerful, informative, and practical information. Holmes states:

In 1992 Bronislaw Malinowski laid out his conception of participant observation as a specific enterprise, explaining that “there is a series of phenomena of great importance which cannot possibly be recorded by questioning or computing documents, but have to be observed in their full actuality. (qtd. In Holmes 32)

Stories and observations are valuable and measurable forms of data. They reveal hidden truths that are not obtainable as an outsider or remote researcher. Quantitative data cannot achieve the same holistic picture of a situation without qualitative data. Humanity is complicated; the answers that community developers seek are often not as black and white as quantitative data usually indicates. Ruth Jackson, who conducted a qualitative study in Ethiopia on female health in the workplace, states:

Qualitative research, on the other hand, attempts to answer ‘why’ and ‘how’ questions by looking at the meanings of people's lives; representing their views and perspectives;

attending to and accounting for real-world conditions; contributing insights from existing or new concepts that might help explain social behavior; and, acknowledging the potential relevance of multiple sources of evidence rather than relying on a single source alone. (556)

A quick and straightforward solution is usually not the sustainable one. When an issue is only observed from afar and from a singular perspective, the solution will only be equipped to account for a very narrow range of variables. A sustainable solution must be found by observing, listening, searching, and experiencing every perspective. By doing so, solutions can involve all stakeholders and ensure that contextualization and copowerment are taking place.

Action Research

Action research is one of the most effective qualitative research methods for community developers. Ernest Stringer argues, “Action research seeks to directly engage the complex dynamics of given social contexts in order to accomplish practical solutions to issues affecting people’s lives” (4). Community development is about engaging communities and working alongside them to create sustainable solutions to unique problems. Action research services the needs of community developers by accounting for contextualization and seeking practical solutions. Stringer states further, “Action research also seeks to build a body of knowledge that enhances professional and community practices and increases the well-being of the people involved” (4). Research should be done with the people, not on people. Thus, action research is a prevalent qualitative inquiry method among community developers. Action research enables developers to engage in practices that help to improve the lives of others while working together towards sustainable solutions.

Action research can be deeply rewarding for those using it. Unlike the non-personable nature of quantitative data, action research helps developers form deep bonds and relationships. Stringer states, “Action research therefore is often professionally fulfilling at a deeply personal level, especially for those who seek to challenge continuing issues that threaten the well-being of people in current times” (5). Action research has allowed me as a deeply empathetic person to develop relationships and build trust with those I wish to help, and those relationships are crucial for co-creating understanding and unique solutions. When research involves other humans, it is not possible to remove subjectivity. Instead of pretending to be objective, action research embraces the subjectivity of human interpretation and interpersonal relationships by emphasizing the importance of community immersion.

Action research also ensures that there is accountability for community developers. Community development projects often have little accountability for failure and any harm done to their clients. Building relationships and trust with a community will make a developer a more visible figure than someone who wrote a project plan from thousands of miles away. Action research is more likely to make developers bear the responsibilities for their work and care about the results of a project after it is completed.

My future vocation as a community developer aligns very closely with the qualitative method of action research. Stringer perfectly describes some of my frustrations with my current occupation of teaching:

Professional and service occupations – teaching, social work, health care, psychology, youth work, and so on – thus have the potential to provide meaningful and fulfilling work that is intrinsically rewarding. Increasingly, however, people in these sectors find their work to be more demanding and less satisfying as they struggle to balance growing

demands on their energies from increasing work-loads and time – consuming requirements of increased reporting. (5)

Teaching can be gratifying. Helping students achieve their potential is highly satisfying on a personal level. However, these moments tend to be only a small percentage of the teaching experience. Large amounts of my effort and energy as a professional are directed towards trainings that are never systematically implemented, parent communication during my personal time, grading, and being pushed to pass struggling students to meet higher graduation rates rather than develop solutions to assist students in their learning. Stringer provides another example of what I am referencing:

In the current context, for example, teachers are often held accountable for the poor performance of their students, politicians and education authorities blaming teacher practices for low test scores, when academic performance is far more affected by factors outside of the classroom and school. (5)

These outside factors are where I want to place my energy. Using action research methods, a community developer could help alleviate many of the issues that students face in a capacity that a teacher could not. Action research can directly tackle unique problems and develop creative solutions.

Appreciative Inquiry

Alongside action research, appreciative inquiry is another helpful research method for community developers. Appreciative inquiry is about solving issues by using a positive mindset and focusing on the aspects of the context that can be identified as strengths. Sue Hammond explains, “The appreciative eye assumes that in every piece of art there is beauty. Art then, is a beautiful idea translated into a concrete form” (1). Uyghurs are more than just the suffering that

they are currently enduring, and that humanity must be recognized by the researcher. Research is often regarded as a purely objective endeavor, but forgoing subjectivity is not practical for community development. Developers must understand complex and culturally contextualized issues facing a people, which is only possible by building subjective relationships. Sunstein and Chiseri-Strater state, “Instead of leaving out personal, subjective information, fieldworkers should write it in” (ch. 3). Fieldwork as a community developer is subjective, and that subjective information is more valuable when it is known than when it is hidden away. Sunstein and Chiseri-Strater state further, “In fact, fieldworkers achieve a type of objectivity through intersubjectivity, the method of connecting as many different perspectives on the same data as possible” (ch. 3). My mindset going into my fieldwork in Washington D.C. was that of appreciative inquiry. Despite having preconceived notions about how I could help the Uyghur diaspora, I approached fieldwork with an open mind and an open heart. I wanted to listen to the Uyghur people and search for a project concept that could be helpful while recognizing the strengths and beauty of their people and culture.

Qualitative Inquiry and Washington D.C. Fieldwork

Without qualitative inquiry and action research, my project proposal would never have come to fruition. I had presumptions about what would be a worthwhile project for the Uyghur people before arriving in Washington D.C. for the International Religious Freedom Summit. Uyghurs are a Turkish ethnic group of Muslims. Their geographical origins are sometimes contested, but they are the ancestral inhabitants of the Xinjiang autonomous region in China, where they now face genocide. Originally, I wanted to study how Uyghur ethnicity played a role in the Chinese Communist Party’s assault on Xinjiang and the Uyghur people. However, I kept a critical thought at the forefront of my mind; these people are struggling for survival, and I want to find

the best possible way to help. As Sunstein and Chiseri-Strater state regarding qualitative researchers, “They must be ready and willing to unpack their own cultural baggage and embark on a collaborative journey with those they study” (ch. 3). I entered a complex social dynamic of politicians, religious leaders, Uyghurs, Kazakhs, media, and people like myself seeking answers. Entering this social dynamic required listening and observing everyone and everything around me. In an interview with Julie Millsap, a representative for the prominent NGO Campaign for Uyghurs, I learned that there was an opportunity to fill in a gap of research that was sorely needed. She informed me:

You know, most of what's happening and what's receiving attention right now is active genocide. You know, there's not a lot of data or statistics or anything like that about specifically how certain aspects of trauma are playing out and affecting [Uyghurs]... but more specifically, one area we had looked at also, and we just don't have the capacity to do a lot with this, is this kind of intergenerational trauma [that] is already potentially playing out with Uyghur families and affecting children. And maybe even people that don't have experiences living back in the region [XinJiang] but because of the trauma that their parents are experiencing. So that's one area that people had indicated interest in, but we don't have capacity really to do a whole lot with right now. (Millsap)

Through this interview and spending time with the Uyghur community, I began to formulate the idea that a mental health project centered around the Uyghur diaspora would be a practical solution to a genuine problem. Through additional interviews, observations, and befriending members of the Uyghur community, the need for my project became clearer. Sunstein and Chiseri-Strater state, “Subjectivity — our inner feelings and belief systems — allows us to uncover some features of culture that are not always apparent” (ch. 3). The relationships that I

developed during fieldwork allowed me to understand the issues that Uyghurs are facing on a far deeper level than I could have as an outsider.

Qualitative Methods and the Project

The Uyghur Meditative Retreat project uses qualitative research methods to provide adequate care for Uyghurs. The project is designed with practical solutions to the mental health trauma faced by the Uyghur diaspora. In his book *Reconcile*, John Lederach asks, “Is moving away from the conflict – having space and time at a distance from the source of the pain – needed?” (36). Through qualitative inquiry, the answer to that question is yes. Uyghurs want an escape from their depressing reality. They want to be invited to an opportunity for healing and reflection. A meditative retreat allows the Uyghur diaspora to connect with one another and develop community in their shared trauma and experiences. John Lederach states in another book, *Conflict Transformation*, “Prescriptively, transformation represents deliberate intervention to minimize the destructive effects of social conflict and to maximize its potential for growth in the person as an individual human being, at physical, emotional, and spiritual levels” (24). A guided meditative retreat accomplishes all these things. The project distances Uyghurs from destructive conflict and brings them to where they can physically relax, emotionally heal, and connect spiritually with God and members of their community.

Conclusion

I created my proposal for a Uyghur meditative retreat project out of genuine concern for the Uyghur people. I strongly empathize with what they are enduring. Quantitative data about the Uyghur genocide would never have led me to create my project, at least not without qualitative inquiry to accompany it. In the words of the brilliant Berne Brown, “I am interested in some messy topics. But I want to be able to make them not messy” (2:55-3:12). Understanding how we

as community developers and researchers can properly address messy issues requires that we step into the mess ourselves. Qualitative inquiry is about doing the research with, for, and alongside our subjects rather than on them.

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ESSAY THREE: ICD VALUES

The International Community Development program at Northwest University has a fantastic set of values that define what it means to serve others. The values and core of the program are contextualization, copowerment, and collaboration. Becoming a community developer requires some amount of transformation through reflection and self-discovery. Community development is a two-way street. We must work alongside those we wish to serve to understand context.

These experiences are transformative for the developer, who must also understand themselves and how their work affects them. Through my time in the ICD program, I have been transformed in many ways. It has been a journey that has changed my perspective, opened my heart further, and allowed me to understand myself on a far deeper level than I did beforehand. I will be delving into how the ICD program values have transformed me and my understanding of my future vocation as a community developer.

Personal Transformation

The ICD values of this program have been transformative in finding my true self. 2020 was a challenging year as the pandemic raged across the world. Like many others, I was stuck at home and felt I lacked a purpose. Watching George Floyd get murdered and Black Lives Matter protests erupting across the world was a catalytic moment in my life. Salter McNeil expresses in *Roadmap to Reconciliation 2.0*, “We need someone or something to push us out of our comfort zones and the isolated social enclaves that keep us alienated from other people and their differing perspectives” (46). The death of George Floyd changed the trajectory of my life. As I watched, I felt helpless and powerless. I have always had a passion for social justice and humanitarian work, and this event sparked a fire in my soul that is still burning hot. I taught high school in a largely conservative, traditional, and monocultural community. I felt isolated from my passion

and powerless to do anything about it. This event began my journey of self-realization. Teaching might not fulfill my soul enough. I had a burning desire to go out into the world and serve others more directly. This catalytic event led me to the ICD program a few months later.

Letting go of Societal Expectations

Transformation can be complex, especially when expectations are set upon you. My family is full of teachers. My mom has been a principal and special education teacher for over twenty years, and I have a set of grandparents that were teachers for over thirty years. It felt like teaching was what I was meant to do from a young age. For example, I explained to my mom how to play a game with action figures that I had invented when I was four years old. My mom told me that my four-year-old self enjoyed explaining the (nonsensical) rules of the game to her more than I did actually playing the game. It was no surprise to anyone when I declared as an English Language Arts Teaching major. As I began my first teaching position, where I was thrown into a challenging set of circumstances, such as being hired on the first day of the new school year, I found myself succeeding. Teaching is difficult, especially for new teachers trying to get everything figured out.

The fact that I was performing well made letting go of societal expectations more difficult. Teaching has been a great experience thus far, and I have been getting high praise from students, other teachers, and my principal. However, teaching in a public-school setting is not where my heart belongs. In *Let Your Life Speak*, Parker Palmer states, “Teaching is at the heart of my vocation and will manifest itself in any role I play” (ch. 2). I realized that my true vocation did not fit the traditional societal role of teaching in a classroom. Through the ICD program and its emphasis on contextualization, copowerment, and collaboration, I began learning how to

better listen to myself. I needed to let go of what was expected of me to make room for what was truly meant for me.

Finding Myself

The values of the ICD program gave voice to the deepest parts of myself that did not have words. The deep desire that I felt to go out into the world after the George Floyd catalytic moment was a need for collaboration, contextualization, and copowerment. I crave a life of using my empathy for others, leadership, and teaching to connect with communities and work to create creative solutions to complex problems. Kuenkel states, “Empathy is a mind-set, because it can become a value that we live by – seeing the person behind the task, seeing the story behind the person, reaching out to the humanness in other people” (130). This realization is how I discovered that my true vocation lies outside of teaching in the classroom. My first amendment rights are limited as a public-school teacher. I cannot genuinely express my empathy for those who are suffering around the world or share my thoughts on contemporary issues. The burning fire in my soul to serve others lies outside the classroom. Palmer states, “By looking anew at my community work through the lens of education, I saw that as an organizer I had never stopped being a teacher – I was simply teaching in a classroom without walls” (ch. 2). Through these realizations that I have learned in the ICD program, I have become connected to my true self and identified my true vocation.

Social Justice

Social Justice has been a passion of mine since childhood. As mentioned previously, the murder of George Floyd was the catalytic moment that led me to the ICD program. It can be challenging for those who grow up without much diversity in their communities to empathize with minority groups suffering and facing inequality. An important fact to remember is that emotional pain is

just as real to the brain as physical pain (McDonald & Leary 2005). I did not grow up in a diverse community, but I have always possessed a deep empathy for the hurt of others and grew up with a black family member whose experiences opened my eyes to the need for social justice at a young age. The ICD program has exponentially expanded my understanding of social justice, and I now feel equipped with the knowledge and insight to make a positive difference.

Taking on issues of social justice is no small task. Despite my growth in this area, positive change is more likely to occur through cooperation and collaboration than pushing forward on our own. A group of individuals coming together to solve complex problems yields many more excellent opportunities for developing creative and sustainable solutions. Charles Vogl states, "The group sees itself as part of the greater dynamic world and seeks to enrich the world with its work and teaching. This can include global service efforts or simply local efforts to create friendship and connection" (120). There is more room for contextualization in a group by pooling together more perspectives to gain a holistic view of a given situation. A group dynamic can utilize cooperation to generate better and more creative ideas. Salter McNeil states, "Whether the goal is to defend the nation or win the Super Bowl, having a shared mission makes all the difference" (80). Making a positive difference is challenging, but much less so when working together.

In addition to being passionate about social justice issues for minority groups, environmental justice is another form of social justice that drives me. The environment connects humanity, making environmental crises like global warming a social issue. David Pellow argues, "Ecological modernization is possible precisely as a result of global environmental inequality and racism" (34). What Pellow is describing is called globalization. Globalization is the process of the world's systems becoming more interconnected in numerous ways that have changed how

humanity interacts with each other. Thomas Friedman describes globalization as "global flows of commerce, finance, credit, social networks, and connectivity generally are weaving markets, media, central banks, companies, schools, communities, and individuals more tightly together than ever" (26). Globalization has harmed many countries, especially in the global south, who do not have the infrastructure or resources to "keep up" with the drastically changing world. Many of these countries suffer from global warming-related disasters at a disproportional rate as globalization continues to raise living standards in the global north. Bryant Myers explains, "It is a historical fact colonial administrators created a series of roadblocks that prevented the global south from participating in the Industrial Revolution" (3). Although globalization has brought the world together like never before, it has done so with a myriad of inequality. I wish to work in positions that allow me to help solve these inequalities.

The ongoing Uyghur genocide, the focus of my meditative retreat project proposal, is also an issue of social justice. Forced labor from Uyghur detainment camps has made many supply chains worldwide unethical. Omer Kanat states:

Particularly alarming is the solar energy industry, as 42 percent of the world's polysilicon supply is manufactured in the Uyghur region. Recent research found eleven Chinese solar industry companies publicly stated their participation in the labor transfer program, four more that are located within industrial parks which have accepted transferred Uyghurs, and ninety companies that have affected supply chains. The solar energy industry recognizes this as a problem, with one trade group encouraging its members to divest from the Uyghur region by June 2021. (5)

People worldwide are largely unaware that they benefit from cheap products made by Uyghur forced labor. This unintentional complicity needs to be addressed through awareness and

sanctions. Regardless of the specific field within community development that I will find myself in, my future vocation will involve a position that allows me to work for positive change regarding social justice.

Copowerment and Future Vocation

Copowerment is a powerful ICD value that helped me to understand myself better. Essentially, copowerment is a two-way street of empowerment whereas both parties help each other towards a goal and growth. All parties involved in development must work together to achieve growth by building relationships. Through relationship building, the developer and the community can better understand the needs of each other as they work together to find creative and sustainable solutions. Copowerment has always been a part of who I am; I just never had a word for it until joining the ICD program. I have always been the person with whom friends or family will come to share their struggles. Much of this is due to my deep empathy for the hurt of others and being a good listener. These interactions have always been a two-way street for me. Not only do I provide an outlet for someone to vent, but the other person provides me with opportunities for growth as I reflect upon my own life and experiences. Growth occurs for both sides.

In a future vocation, I need to place myself in a position that allows me to do what I am good at, connecting with others. Vogl states, "Further, working for community success may actually lead to the best personal success" (126). Seeing others grow and thrive gives my soul tremendous amounts of joy. I know that I would flourish in a position that allows me to engage in social and environmental justice while building relationships with others.

Theology Development and Future Vocation

Above all else, the ICD program and its values have been invaluable to my theology transformation. My faith journey has been long and difficult in my relatively short life. I grew up in a Christian household and had strong values of faith. Faith, as it does for many, brought me peace. However, multiple events and circumstances pushed me away from Christian practice and, eventually, faith itself. I experienced firsthand many of the issues facing mainstream Christian churches in the United States today. I frequently was exposed to the misuse of the bible and its teachings to excuse less than ideal behavior and a lack of meaningful service to others. My values seldom lined up with the practice of Christianity that I witnessed around me. Unsure of what else to do with my confusion, I severed my connection to Christianity and faith around the age of eighteen. Since then, I have been living almost an utterly secular perspective. The ICD program and its values have helped me reclaim my lost faith by showing me that many in the world truly work to spread love and positive change through faith.

As I search for a career in the field of community development, I will be much more inclined to move towards a position of faith-based service than I ever thought I would have been previously. More than ever before, bridges need to be built between the Christian and Muslim communities. Islamophobia is a genuine concern contributing to the ongoing genocide of the Uyghurs. Rushan Abbas states:

The practice of Islam, labeled as a sickness by the CCP, has itself been criminalized.¹² The CCP has done outright what other campaigns fell short of; it has officially recognized Islam as radicalism. Leaked audio from inside the CCP last year reveals that Uyghurs chosen for detention are determined to have contracted an “ideological illness.”¹³ Fasting during Ramadan, one of the central tenets of Islam, is considered by

from alcohol, and the refusal to consume pork are given likewise designations. Is this not a war upon Islam? (5)

During my fieldwork in Washington D.C., I was hosted by ChinaAid, an NGO founded in the Christian faith that is currently working to help the Uyghur community. I found tremendous purpose, joy, and pride in my work with ChinaAid. My theological development has opened many doors for me to walk through as I pursue my true vocation.

Conclusion

My experience of the ICD program has changed my life and allowed me to connect on a far deeper level with myself. Before finding the ICD program, I had always felt like there was something slightly “off” about my life. There was a disconnect between the life I was living, who I am, and the life I was meant to live. The values and principles of the ICD program helped me connect my values, spirituality, and inner voice together. Going through personal transformation is never easy. Too many people fear the future because life requires change. Change is hard. As George Addair states, “Everything you’ve ever wanted is sitting on the other side of fear.” The ICD program and its values allowed me to connect with my true self, identify my true vocation, and develop the tools and knowledge to seek out what was meant for me: a life of spreading love and positivity through service to others.

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APPENDIX

Project Proposal

Uyghur Healing through Meditative Retreat

A Project Proposal by David Bluher

Duration: 5 Days

Estimated Total Project Cost: \$93,700

Target Population: Members of the Uyghur diaspora struggling with mental health.

Location: Antalya, Turkey.

Partners: Campaign for Uyghurs, Uyghur Wellness Initiative, Uyghur Human Rights Project, and other NGO and international organizations.

Introduction

Uyghurs worldwide are being detained and placed into forced labor camps by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). For Uyghurs, the uncertainty over their safety and the safety of their family is weighing heavily. Uyghurs are experiencing mental distress and hardship on a massive scale, with no current end in sight to the ongoing genocide of their people. When resources are invested into mental health services, communities are brought together and inspired to share in a collective healing process. As the genocide of the Uyghur people continues, mental health services will become more necessary.

In order for the Uyghur people to heal as a community, organizational projects need to invest in mental health services that can alleviate Uyghur suffering. The ongoing genocide that is being committed against the Uyghur people has left many in their community with trauma, which is why a project dedicated to helping the Uyghur people heal is of utmost importance. This proposal calls for the creation of a project that provides Uyghurs an opportunity to partake in meditative healing through a spiritual retreat. The program would be built on principles of copowerment and contextualization, helping the Uyghurs participate in their own healing journey. This proposal will contain contextual background information on the Uyghur genocide and what is currently happening. Additionally, this proposal will delve into meditative retreats and therapy, detailing how these techniques will benefit the Uyghur community. Finally, this proposal will outline a project guide that may be used to create such a project that will bring mental healing to the Uyghur community. This project proposal is intended for the NGO Campaign for Uyghurs, who has expressed interest in such a project but is also directed toward other organizations that aim to help the Uyghur community recover.

Uyghur Genocide: Historical Context

Probably to the shock of some readers, the process that began the Uyghur genocide started over seven years ago. For many years, China has been slowly and quietly assaulting Uyghur culture, language, and human rights. The Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, as it is officially called, has been home to the Uyghurs for centuries. According to Ali Caksu, Xinjiang is one of China's poorest regions, and the Uyghurs have been facing discrimination and many other hardships for years. Many of these issues date back further than 2014. "Uyghurs suffer from discrimination in employment and education, widespread corruption and restrictions on their freedoms, religious practice and culture" (Caksu). Uyghur protests of Han Chinese oppression can be dated back as early as 2009. The United States began to get Uyghur immigrants in the early 2010s, as some Uyghurs began to fear what was coming. The Chinese Communist Party has increased its squeeze on Xinjiang and the Uyghur people as the years have gone on.

Becoming a Genocide

In 2016, the oppression of the Uyghur people escalated into genocide. Caksu explains, "In August 2016, Chen Quanguo became Xinjiang's new Communist Party secretary and mass detention and surveillance of Uyghurs followed" (Casku). Reeducation and forced labor camps were constructed in mass in 2016, and even more have been erected since. China began to detain Uyghurs for their ethnicity, religion, and existence. Joseph Fallon states:

Uyghuristan [Xinjiang] now resembles a "massive internment camp that is shrouded in secrecy, a sort of 'no rights zone' ... members of the Uyghur community and other Muslims were being treated as 'enemies of the state' solely on the basis of their ethno-religious identity. (77)



Figure 2

Watchtowers on a high-security facility at what is believed to be a re-education camp in China's Xinjiang region.

Photo: AFP / Greg Baker

Quite simply, the Uyghurs are being targeted for being Uyghur. Their language is forbidden to be spoken in schools, and the practice of their religion is outlawed. In one of my interviews, I talked to Natasha¹ who is a Uyghur reporter working for a significant network and who wished not to be named for obvious security reasons. With incredible frustration and sadness, Natasha told me that she no longer wishes to share her personal experiences because her family has been missing since 2016, and no one has cared enough to stop China (Natasha). She expressed significant frustration that this genocide has been ongoing with hardly enough action to oppose it. Natasha is originally from East Turkistan, a region many Uyghurs call home. I asked her why China was targeting her people. She quickly responded, “Existence. Maybe you don’t understand... China decided to erase us, but we try to exist as Uyghur” (Natasha). The genocide of the Uyghur people is still ongoing and escalating.

The Genocide Today

Efforts to erase the Uyghur people and their culture is not facing enough resistance. Forced labor camps and reeducation camps continue to operate. Survivors of these camps speak of torture, brainwashing, forced injections, sexual abuse, and organ harvesting. I met one such survivor, Gulzira, who arrived in the United States in the summer of 2021 after escaping China. She was a victim of China's reeducation and forced labor camps and was subjected to forced injections (Bluher). Gulzira's experiences were harrowing and are being faced by many others. These concentration camps are the source of much distress and trauma among the Uyghur community. Many Uyghurs have not heard from their family or friends for years, unsure of their status.

China is denying any responsibility for its actions concerning the Uyghur Genocide. China claims that its activity in Xinjiang is part of its "War on Terrorism" campaign to defend

¹ Pseudonym

against extremists (Caksu). The truth, however, is that the CCP is committing genocide of the Uyghur people on a massive scale. China's media and government are working tirelessly to cover their actions. I learned how far-reaching the CCP's influence has become when I met Mustafa Aksu, a Uyghur activist. Mustafa Aksu is from Xinjiang and is the Program Coordinator for Research and Advocacy at Uyghur Human Rights Project, an NGO working to support Uyghurs and their families affected by the ongoing conflict. During my conversations with him, he told me a terrifying story:

A few years ago, Mustafa received a phone call from his childhood friend. Mustafa was working in Washington D.C. and had not heard from his friend in over ten years since Mustafa had left China. Suspicious, Mustafa was curious why he had not heard from his friend in so long. His friend claimed that he wanted to catch up and started asking him questions about his place of work and daily activities. Even more suspicious now, Mustafa asked him what was going on. Mustafa's friend asked for cooperation in exchange for information about Mustafa's parents. Mustafa's parents had disappeared years ago after being detained and taken to a forced labor camp. Mustafa promptly ended the call. (Bluher)

China's reach and influence are beyond the awareness of many. They continue to undermine global awareness of their human rights violations and crimes against humanity as they extend their assault on Uyghur existence. China's lack of freedom regarding internet access has significantly contributed to the horrifying success of the CCP's propaganda. Many Chinese citizens remain utterly unaware of what their country is doing to the Uyghurs. They refuse to believe that a genocide is occurring because they have been seduced by the CCP's nationalist and ethnocentric propaganda. I have personally experienced this. In 2018, I engaged in a study

abroad program through Central Washington University to teach high school English in Macau, China. I developed excellent relationships with many students and teachers. One student, in particular, was extremely bright and kind. He always told me he wanted to become a medical doctor, and I encouraged him to follow his passion. I had kept in contact with this student over the years and was delighted when he told me that he had enrolled in medical school in China. This year, however, I received a sad and humbling reminder of the effectiveness of the CCP's propaganda. This student discovered my Uyghur activism on social media and promptly called me a liar. He stated that China "could never be like Nazi Germany" and that he was surprised that a teacher like me could be "so gullible to believe the lies of western media." He sent me falsified articles regarding Uyghur concentration camps being just regular schools despite their prison appearance. This interaction broke my heart and demonstrated the power and influence of the CCP. The Uyghur people need support, and people are gathering around the world trying to do just that.

Seeking a Need

Amidst a genocide, the Uyghur diaspora needs assistance. The question is, what is a tangible project that could provide immediate relief to Uyghurs? Easterly believes that to find contextual solutions to real problems, one must become a "Searcher." He states, "A Searcher believes only insiders have enough knowledge to find solutions, and that most solutions must be homegrown" (6). I sought an answer to this question through my research and fieldwork at the International Religious Freedom Summit (IRFS) in Washington, D.C. The first inaugural IRF Summit was held this year in 2021, bringing together NGOs and activists worldwide to solve many issues, from religious persecution to human rights violations. At the IRF Summit, I was an intern for the NGO ChinaAid, which works to expose China's human rights violations and rescue the

religiously persecuted from China. Through ChinaAid, I met with victims of the Uyghur Genocide. Additionally, I met with other prominent NGOs, such as Uyghur Human Rights Project and Campaign for Uyghurs. These experiences allowed me to hear the voices of the Uyghur diaspora and learn how the conflict is impacting them.



Figure 5

Bob Fu, founder of ChinaAid, delivering a speech on religious freedom in China at the 2021 International Religious Freedom Summit.

Photo: David Bluher

Speaking with the Victims

During my time at the IRF Summit, I spoke with many people who shared their ideas about what Uyghurs needed the most. One such person is Muhammed, a Uyghur living on the east coast of the United States who is very connected with America's Uyghur community. He told me in an interview, "I have multiple friends who have contemplated suicide. Uyghur people are traumatized, even here. We are terrified that our culture is not going to survive" (Muhammed). Uyghurs who have managed to make it to the United States are struggling with the uncertainty of their friends and family. Muhammed expressed that he was stressed about trying to preserve Uyghur culture here in America, worrying that assimilation could lead to the disappearance of his culture and identity if the genocide back in China continues. Muhammed informed me that these worries even played a factor in his decision to marry his wife, a Uyghur woman who also immigrated to the United States (Muhammed). These concerns weigh heavily on the Uyghur people, as does the unknown status of loved ones. During the IRF Summit, Uyghur Kalbinur Ghenni shared the harrowing story of her sister:

She was detained. When they took her, they said that she would be reeducated for three months. But they didn't tell any other information. But she didn't come back, even in three years. In three years, I was disconnected with my family. In that time, they detained my cousin, three other cousins, my uncle, and are holding my sister. She was a teacher in public school. The art teacher, a painter. In my hometown, 60% of Uyghur teachers were taken including my sister. After the detention in concentration camps, after two and a half years later, they gave her a sentence of 17 years, just last year. The reason is, Chinese government insistently claimed that my sister was praying in 2013 during our father's

funeral. Seven years for praying, and another ten years because she kept a religious book that they claimed, that religious book, would lead to terrorism. (Gheni)



Figure 4

Kalbinur Gheni delivering a speech at the 2021 International Religious Freedom Summit.

Photo: David Bluher

Kalbinur delivered this speech to a room full of people with tears in her eyes and pain on her face. These are some of the experiences that the Uyghur people are going through, and there are many more with experiences like Kalbinur's. The more time I spent at the IRF Summit and got to know members of the Uyghur diaspora, the clearer it became to me that mental health is of major concern.

Uyghur Mental Health

The Uyghur diaspora suffers from mental distress because of the genocide being committed against their people. Uyghurs need mental health services to deal with depression, anxiety, and hopelessness. To arrive at my project proposal, I first looked at the only other Uyghur mental health project: The Uyghur Wellness Initiative. Peace Catalyst International is an NGO with a mission to create bridges of community between Christians and Muslims. Their Uyghur Wellness Initiative project provides the services of mental health professionals to Uyghurs and their families. Bill Clark, the Northwest Regional Director for Peace Catalyst International and the pioneer of the Uyghur Wellness Initiative, spoke with me about Uyghurs and second-hand trauma. Clark told me, "Yeah, that's one reason we started the Uyghur Wellness Initiative. To help bring councilors alongside Uyghurs and activists alike for those who are willing." This project launched last year in 2020 and has been helping many Uyghurs cope with their trauma.

Despite some early success, the Uyghur Well Initiative has run into some issues with reaching more of the Uyghur diaspora. First, like many people, Uyghurs are experiencing "Zoom fatigue" and online interactions. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, most client sessions occur online. Online sessions can often result in Uyghur clients not showing up to their appointment or a lack of willingness to risk engaging with the project for fear of internet security. Rushan Abbas is a prominent Uyghur leader and the founder of Campaign for Uyghurs.

She supports the idea that Uyghurs are tired of Zoom calls and online meetings. “Not asking them to go online and sit in front of Zoom and talk about issues and cry and get depressed. What they need is to get them out of that atmosphere” (Abbas). Additionally, the Uyghur culture has some adverse opinions about seeking therapy. There is a social stigma around seeking mental health services that deter some members of the Uyghur community from seeking counselors with the Uyghur Wellness Initiative. Louisa Greve, another pioneer of the Uyghur Wellness Initiative and the Director of Global Advocacy for Uyghur Human Rights Project, mentioned that the social stigma around mental health can be a challenge. She explained to me:

We are trying to destigmatize the idea that, you know, Uyghurs need to be supported and loved. You know, everyone is so strong. They go on with their lives raising children, doing their jobs, making a living, but some can't. You know, sometimes people have a hard time when they just can't function, or they'll sink into depression. (Greve)

This project proposal aims to bypass some of these issues through a meditative retreat, an opportunity for Uyghurs to heal through restorative means.

Benefits of Meditative Retreats

Extensive research and endless testimonials have proven how beneficial a retreat can be.

Businesses use retreats to boost company morale and productivity, organizations use retreats to help build community, and retreats can aid the traumatized. Meditative and spiritual retreats have seen increased usage as therapy options due to their many benefits.

Retreats and Therapy

Those who have been traumatized or are struggling with mental health can benefit significantly from a focused retreat. Professor Todd Kashdan at George Mason University states, “Far too many business and personal trips are designed to maximize comfort and minimize uncertainty...

but holidays are a terrific self-development opportunity” (Kashdan). Retreats can help return a person to their whole self when the trip is focused. Of course, there are benefits to a relaxed and unscripted vacation, but a purposeful retreat can bring more significant benefits. A study done in Austria showed that meditative retreats yielded more remarkable results than regular vacations, stating:

To conclude, we found that meditation retreats, as well as vacations during which vacationers practiced meditation at their own discretion, were associated with greater medium-term increases in mindfulness and emotional well-being than an "ordinary" vacation during which meditation was not practiced. (Blasche et al.)

Meditation during retreats can help victims to recover from trauma. A meditative retreat can help give someone a reprieve from their struggle to a greater degree than a regular vacation. Blasche et al. states further:

Interestingly, ten weeks after the leisure episodes, acting with awareness and emotional well-being were higher and fatigue was lower following meditation retreats and vacation with meditation compared to vacation-without-meditation. This is in line with previous research both on the effects of mindfulness training [22, 27], as well as on the effects of meditation retreats [38, 39] showing that meditation practice and/or retreats not only improve mindfulness but also well-being in a durable fashion. (Blasche et al.)

Meditative retreats can have a lasting impact on participants extending beyond the retreat itself.

While the effects of vacations are more temporary, retreats can provide participants an opportunity for growth and protection against the trials and tribulations of life.

Uyghur Healing Through Retreats

Uyghurs could benefit significantly from participation in a meditative retreat program. Many Uyghurs have been traumatized and are struggling with their mental health. Going on a retreat would allow Uyghurs to break from reality and from their fear of being sent back to China to be put into forced labor camps. Additionally, meditative retreats have a lasting effect on participants that can aid resiliency. Resiliency is an essential factor that should not be overlooked. By engaging in a contemplative retreat, Uyghurs will be getting crucial mental health therapy without the stigma of going and seeing a counselor through a program like the Uyghur Wellness Initiative. Uyghurs won't need to deal with "Zoom fatigue" that many people face due to the pandemic. Most importantly, this project is something that Uyghurs themselves are requesting. Contextualization is essential for any project's success. Turkey is home to one of the largest populations of the Uyghur diaspora, fearful of deportation back to China. After visiting Turkey, Rushan Abbas told me in our interview:

I see these young [Uyghur] girls who...they don't have parents; they cannot communicate with their parents. They see other Turkish families that they are peers with at high schools or universities, and everybody is going on vacation, everyone is going somewhere and spending wonderful time in summer. They have no place to go. They were asking [me] if you could arrange some sort of training workshop like you just did last week but not in Istanbul. Get us out. Get us out somewhere. Put us in some, even if it is not some fancy hotel, just put us somewhere that we can get away and just change the atmosphere. Somewhere we can spend a few days and feel like we just went on vacation. That really broke my heart. Hearing that, what she said, it's what people need and what they want. (Abbas)

This project proposal can help the Uyghur diaspora. They deserve an opportunity to be invited to heal in a way that works for them. Ruth Barton states:

The other thing that is simply wonderful about a good invitation is that it means I am wanted. For some of us the desire to be wanted is closer to the surface than it is for others, but no matter how buried it might be, the desire to know we are appreciated, accepted, and desired is a fairly universal human longing. (2)

A meditative retreat can help Uyghurs receive holistic and spiritual therapy that will be lasting and effective. Engaging in a program that they are asking for can significantly increase the effectiveness of their healing compared to participating in other methods of therapy that they may be reluctant to employ. This project proposal is designed with copowerment in mind to work alongside the Uyghur community in their own meditative and spiritual journey.

Project Synopsis

This project would invite the Uyghur diaspora to partake in a meditative retreat. The retreat would take place over five days and include group activities, free time, food, and flights.

Following this overview, organizations and NGOs should be able to implement this project in a tangible manner that allows Uyghurs to heal. Following a successful retreat, the project could be replicable with new clients. Depending on participant feedback taken through surveys, the project could be changed to different locations or adjusted in other manners to fit the needs of the Uyghur diaspora.

Project Objective

The overall objective of this project is to provide members of the Uyghur diaspora with an opportunity to heal. As Walls and Lynch state, “Your goal is simply to do the best thing you can do, right now, and then do it again and again” (64). This project will help the Uyghur people to

receive mental health services and build up a resistance to the pressures and stress of their everyday lives amidst the ongoing genocide by partaking in a meditative retreat. The project aims to provide immediate assistance to the Uyghur diaspora.

Project Implementation

Implementing this project will involve gathering donations and grants to fund the retreat of Uyghur participants and then carrying out the retreat itself. The project aims to bring at least 20 Uyghur participants to the first retreat, with the flexibility to expand the project for future events. For the first retreat, the project will be inviting Uyghurs living in Turkey to participate, allowing for minimal travel restrictions. Campaign for Uyghurs can begin creating advertisements and marketing to promote the project. Once participants have been selected, project coordinators will determine a central location and time for the project's orientation. After a brief introduction to the project, transportation will be arranged to the retreat location. Transportation will be determined by the program coordinators depending on location proximity. For the inaugural retreat, which will take place in Antalya, Turkey, transportation by boat, bus, train, or plane are viable options. Once the Uyghur clients arrive at the resort in Antalya, the project lead will welcome the clients and give them the itinerary for the retreat. The project will then follow the itinerary over the next five days, providing food and drinks to the clients between guided meditations and free leisure time. The project is designed to foster community and build strong bonds of friendship and faith. At the conclusion of the five days, surveys will be given to each of the Uyghur clients asking for their feedback on their experience so that the project may be improved for future retreats.

Project Location

The first retreat for this project will take place in Antalya, Turkey. Antalya is a beautiful location surrounded by nature, helping to provide a peaceful destination where Uyghurs can heal. The

city is home to resorts near the Mediterranean coast. The specific location for the retreat is a resort surrounded by orange and pomegranate trees, with bungalow houses for the participants to sleep in. Antalya is the Pearl City of the Mediterranean and is the fifth most populous city in Turkey and Turkey's largest city on the Mediterranean coast (Kircali 1233). This project is designed to be adaptable and can be shifted to alternative locations as needed.

Project Beneficiaries

Project activities will benefit Uyghur clients who enroll in the project. They will receive food and drinks, mental health services through guided meditation, and leisure time in a relaxing getaway location. Other beneficiaries may include the participants' families, Uyghur communities, and all stakeholders in the project.

Project Activities

The following provides a list of all project activities:

No.	Activities	Duration
1.	Project donations are collected through organization fundraisers	~6 months
2.	Project staff selection	~1 month
3.	Project coordinators communicate with Uyghur communities to enroll participants.	~
4.	Reservation of resort location	5 days
5.	Project coordinators determine method of transportation	~
6.	Project coordinators determine location and time of project orientation	~
7.	Project orientation	1 hour
8.	Transportation to retreat location	~

9.	Project welcome at resort	1 hour
10	Breakfasts	1 hour
11.	Snacks/lunches	1 hour
12.	Dinners	1 hour
13.	Group meditations	1-2 hours
14.	Optional group yoga	1-2 hours
15.	Optional group nature hikes	2-4 hours
16.	Leisure/free time	~
17.	Closing statements by program coordinators and meditation specialists	1 hour
18.	Program coordinators handout surveys	30 min
19.	Transportation back to orientation location to end the project	~

Table 1: Graphic listing all project activities and their estimated duration. Variable times are delineated by ~.

Project Itinerary

Project coordinators are responsible for ensuring that the retreat stays on schedule so that Uyghur participants can benefit from each activity. Below is an example of a possible project itinerary:

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8:00 – 9:00am	Project Orientation	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast
9:00 – 10:00am	Transportation	Free Time	Free Time	Free Time	Free Time

10:00 – 11:00am	Transportation	Free Time Optional Hike	Free Time Optional Yoga	Group Meditation	Group Mediation
11:00am – 12:00pm	Transportation	Free Time Optional Hike	Free Time Optional Yoga	Free Time Optional Hike	Free Time Optional Yoga
12:00 – 1:00pm	Transportation	Free Time Optional Hike	Free Time	Free Time Optional Hike	Free Time
1:00 – 2:00pm	Project Welcome	Lunch/Snacks	Lunch/Snacks	Lunch/Snacks	Lunch/Snacks
2:00 – 3:00pm	Snacks	Free Time	Free Time	Free Time	Free Time
3:00 – 4:00pm	Free time	Free Time	Free Time	Free Time	Group Meditation
4:00 – 5:00pm	Group Meditation	Group Meditation	Group Meditation	Group Meditation	Closing Diner
5:00 – 6:00pm	Free Time	Free Time	Free Time	Free Time	Exit Survey
6:00 – 7:00pm	Free Time	Free Time	Free Time	Free Time	Transportation
7:00 – 8:00pm	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	Transportation
8:00 – 10:00pm	Free Time Lights out	Free Time Lights out	Free Time Lights out	Free Time Lights Out	Transportation

Table 2: Graphic showing potential project itinerary

Project Evaluation and Monitoring

Project evaluation is essential for the success of any project. Self-evaluating will be a crucial aspect of the project to ensure that the objective of providing quality mental health service through a meditative retreat is achieved. Qualitative data will be collected in a survey that asks participants about their experience with the project. These surveys will inform the organization running the project to know whether or not the project is helping Uyghurs to cope with the ongoing genocide in a meaningful way. This feedback will allow Uyghurs to engage in copowerment with Campaign for Uyghurs, ensuring that Uyghurs have a voice in their own healing journey and that the project can strive for more efficient methods. Merriam and Tisdell point out, "The research is done with the people, not on or about them" (256). Survey data can be used by Campaign for Uyghurs to determine possible improvements and can be shared with donors to ensure transparency and the impact of the project. An example survey is provided below:

No.	Question	Response
1.	Did you enjoy participating in this retreat?	
2.	Did you make any new friends while on this retreat?	
3.	How did you feel about the spiritual mediations?	
4.	How did you feel about the location of this retreat?	

5.	In your regular day to day life, what is your stress level on a scale of 1-10?	
6.	During this retreat, what was your stress level on a scale of 1-10?	
7.	What other activities would you have liked at this retreat?	
8.	Would you attend this retreat again?	
9.	Would you recommend this project to other Uyghurs?	
10	How do you feel about the future of the Uyghur people?	

Table 3: Table showing potential exit survey questions

Estimated Project Budget

<u>Budget Items</u>	<u>Item</u>	<u>Details</u>	<u>Unit</u>	<u>Unit Cost</u> (USD)	<u>\$USD – TRY</u> Turkish Lira
<u>Retreat Costs</u>	<u>Antalya Resort</u>	<u>Breakfast</u>	<u>04</u>	<u>\$200</u>	<u>2781.64</u>
		<u>Lunch/Snacks</u>	<u>05</u>	<u>\$100</u>	<u>1390.82</u>
		<u>Dinner</u>	<u>04</u>	<u>\$300</u>	<u>4172.46</u>
		<u>Reservation</u>	<u>01</u>	<u>\$3,000</u>	<u>41724.62</u>
		<u>Support Staff</u>	<u>02</u>	<u>\$5,000</u>	<u>208623.09</u>
		<u>Survey Material</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>\$10</u>	<u>139.08</u>
	<u>Transportation</u>	<u>Bus</u>	<u>04</u>	<u>\$2,000</u>	<u>27816.41</u>
		<u>Project Coordinators</u>	<u>02</u>	<u>\$15,000</u>	<u>208161.00</u>

<u>Ongoing Costs</u>	<u>Staffing</u>	<u>Yoga Instructor</u>	<u>01</u>	<u>\$10,000</u>	<u>138774.00</u>
		<u>Meditation Instructor</u>	<u>01</u>	<u>\$10,000</u>	<u>138774.00</u>
	<u>Advertising</u>	<u>Video ads</u>		<u>\$3,000</u>	<u>41632.20</u>
		<u>Website Articles</u>		<u>\$1,000</u>	<u>13877.40</u>
<u>Total Costs</u>			<u>\$93,700</u>	<u>1300312.38</u>	

Table 4: This table shows an estimated budget for the project

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Peacemaking and Reconciliation:

A Roadmap for the Uyghur Genocide

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Author Note

This project was submitted to Laura Holland for the course *Peacemaking and Reconciliation* in the M.A. International Community Development Program at Northwest University in April 2022. Questions regarding this work can be addressed to David Bluher

Introduction

Peacemaking is a difficult task that requires exceptional individuals to rise to the occasion.

Peacemaking often involves the reconciliation of two parties, whether that be two groups of people, people and their environment, people and their government, or people and their faith or spirituality. Reconciling such issues to create sustainable peace requires hearts full of empathy.

Specifically, the Uyghur people are a group that severely needs the compassion of others as they are suffering through the genocide of their people at the hands of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). This essay is not an attempt to create a roadmap to reconciliation between Uyghurs and the CCP. Currently, such a reconciliation seems rather implausible as nations worldwide continue to allow and enable the CCP to continue the genocide. Nazi Germany was seen as an evil that needed to be stopped at all costs during WWII, and the world rallied to do so.

Unfortunately, and heartbreakingly for the Uyghurs, today's world economy is so closely tied with China that much of the world remains unwilling to act on the atrocities and injustice being committed by the CCP. Instead, this essay will offer insight into a peacemaker's most important personal characteristics and a general roadmap for Uyghur reconciliation using Brenda Salter McNeil's reconciliation roadmap framework of catalytic events, realization, preparation, and activation.

Peacemakers

Peacemakers are remarkable individuals. They are people who move towards conflict and the brokenness of our world in hopes of making things better. Katongole and Rice state, "We live together in a broken world, and we do not have to live long to learn that we need healing. We need reconciliation. We know from experience that our world is broken and needs to be fixed" (23). Peacemakers need to be brave. It takes courage and conviction to move purposefully

toward conflict with an open mind. Moving towards conflict makes peacemakers vulnerable and exposes them to risk, as peacemakers must open their hearts to the pain and suffering of others. Peacemakers must be brave, but they must also be emotionally mature and mindful of themselves.

Going out into a broken world requires that a peacemaker remains diligent about the brokenness within themselves. This self-awareness is necessary to avoid making situations worse through our efforts, “We’ve also seen enough to know that our attempts to fix the problems of this world further reveal the depths of our brokenness. The worst evils are committed not only in the name of evil but also in crusades in the name of fixing what is broken” (24). Peacemakers must acknowledge their brokenness as human beings, or they risk developing a white savior or God complex as they aim to help others.

Lastly, but most importantly, peacemakers must be deeply empathic. Without empathy, there can be no reconciliation or peacemaking. In *Reconcile*, Lederach states, “Love and compassion hold the center. These require a fullness of commitment. They emanate from the heart and gut. They burrow and rise in the soul. They fill and focus the mind” (46). Peacemakers must love and care for those they wish to aid with an empathic heart. To help heal the pain of others, peacemakers need to understand that pain through empathy. Peacemakers must be brave, self-aware/mindful, and empathic to create sustainable change and reconcile conflicts.

Uyghurs need reconciliation. Their people are being placed in concentration camps, and the CCP is targeting their culture, traditions, and religion. Between one to three million Uyghurs are currently estimated to be held in concentration camps (US Department of State 2020). Much of the Uyghur diaspora have not heard from their loved ones for years and are unsure of their status, leaving Uyghurs traumatized and without closure. They worry about their family and

friends that they have not heard from, worry about their culture becoming extinct, and worry about the sphere of influence of the CCP and the possibility of being deported back to China. Under the influence of the CCP, nations are deporting Uyghurs around the world to China to be tortured and imprisoned. At the time of writing this essay, a 13-year-old girl and three other Uyghurs in Saudi Arabia are being deported to China, a violation of International Law and human rights (Amnesty International). Of course, Saudi Arabia is a strategic ally of the United States, and thusly the current silence that the U.S. exhibits regarding such deportations must be deafening to the Uyghur people. As peacemakers, trying to reconcile the ongoing conflict between the CCP and the Uyghurs would be a monumentally challenging task, given the silence mentioned earlier by other nations. However, peacemakers can help the Uyghur people to reconcile their spirituality and connection to their culture.

Catalytic Events

Salter McNeil describes five landmarks on the road to reconciliation: catalytic events, realization, identification, preparation, and activation (39). Deportations of the Uyghur people, like the one occurring right now in Saudi Arabia, as mentioned previously, should serve as catalytic events for peacemakers. As peacemakers and Christians, how could we ignore the horrifying reality that children are being deported against their will to be tortured, brainwashed, and imprisoned? These events must be known far and wide to force the populace of the Earth to awaken to the horrors that the Uyghur people are currently facing. Salter-McNeil states, “Catalytic events are vital in the reconciliation process, as they are the primary vehicles for moving people out of old patterns, assumptions and preconceptions and into transformative cycles of change” (40). As horrible as they may be, catalytic events have the power to spur people into action on behalf of the Uyghurs. The genocide of the Uyghurs has been *quietly*

occurring for many years, dating back to the concentration camps being constructed in 2016. Still, many Uyghurs will attest to it beginning even as early as 2012. Let me repeat that. In the 21st century, amidst the age of technological acceleration and highly accessible and fast-spreading news, a genocide has been *quietly* occurring on a large scale for at least *six* years. When I say quietly, I mean so with no disrespect to what the Uyghur people have been enduring. I mean to say that a horrible genocide has been occurring for years, and it does not dominate the headlines of any nation. In *Conflict Transformation*, Lederach states, “the key to transformation is a protective bias toward seeing conflict as a potential catalyst for growth” (15). The world needs to be shocked into transformation concerning the plight of the Uyghur people. The best way to accomplish this transformation is for people to recognize these events by gaining more awareness of the situation.

Realization

Realization is the next step to reconciliation. Salter-McNeil describes this phase as “we reach beyond vague understanding and intellectual assent and come to an awareness that is *contextually connected* (60). After being shocked by a catalytic event, the public needs to understand what is really happening to the Uyghurs. One of the most effective ways to do this would be through awareness events where Uyghurs share their stories. For example, an awareness event is what started my Uyghur advocacy journey. In February 2021, former ICD student and Uyghur advocate Josh Blay held a Uyghur genocide awareness event over Zoom. Multiple Uyghurs spoke at this event, and hearing their stories changed me. The Uyghur genocide went from something I was *aware* of to something I was *invested* in. Salter-McNeil points out that “many times we need to ensure instead that others are being heard. By “passing the mic” to underrepresented voices, we humanize the narrative, hearing, telling and interpreting

their stories with integrity so that different communities can understand and learn from them” (102). Listening to Uyghurs speak about their experiences and the genocide profoundly impacted me, which still drives my research to this day. These types of awareness events are needed during the realization phase to help people truly understand the conflict that is occurring. Charles Vogl states that "stories are the most powerful way we humans learn" (75). Hearing these stories of genocide will not only produce a more profound understanding for those who listen and a much greater level of empathy.

The realization phase includes a deeper understanding of the self and how we are connected to the greater world and the conflict. Anthony Smith reminds us that "our everyday lives are formed, pressed, and oppressed by larger realities” (103). During this process, many people will have to process the unfortunate and horrible reality that they may be unknowingly complicit in the genocide of the Uyghurs. The Uyghur people held in concentration camps are forced to work in warehouses. If purchasing a product that says "made in China" on it, it's possible that the product was made with Uyghur slave labor. While not intentional, such a purchase does contribute to the suffering of the Uyghur people and makes one partially complicit, or at least an enabler, of genocide. This realization is difficult to deal with and requires some form of self-transformation by changing how purchasing decisions are made. A shirt may cost much less when it comes from China, but is that price difference worth the human cost of slave labor endured by millions of Uyghurs? The realization phase is where that answer needs to become a resounding *no*.

Identification

Identification succeeds the realization phase. Salter-McNeil describes the identification phase as “the beginning of shifting our cultural identity” (70). We must begin to identify ourselves and

others who have come to this realization as peacemakers and reconcilers. Salter-McNeil describes further:

It's where we start the journey of seeing ourselves as kingdom people and potential reconcilers. It's where we start in on the hard work of building a new collective identity and a collaborative community that can hold the concerns, values, desires and experiences that we share. (70)

As more people realize what the Uyghurs are going through and how their daily choices are connected, there is a tremendous potential for unity and determination to make a difference. Such a process of identification can lead to people donating to or joining NGOs with the social purpose of assisting Uyghurs, such as the Uyghur Human Rights Project or Campaign for Uyghurs. Identification could mean a community of Christians coming together, knowing that Jesus would want them to act justly by finding a way to help their Muslim neighbors in faith. Essentially, identification involves coming together in a shared realization of what is occurring to the Uyghurs, and that action must be taken. A group of social actors has much more agency for change than an individual, which makes the identification stage so vital.

Preparation

The preparation phase is the most difficult to define in the framework. It could encompass many different actions or ideas from both groups or individuals. Salter-McNeil describes, "This phase moves us from the personal and relational to the structural and the transformational, and the gap between the two is *huge*. This is where we make the decision to be in the game for real – now we're preparing to go public!" (86). As mentioned in the previous paragraph, this could look like a group of people coming together to form an NGO dedicated to helping the Uyghur people. Preparation could include creating a plan of reconciliation within a church organization. This

phase is the most difficult because it requires that people *live* their newfound realizations. Salter-McNeil exclaims, “This is where many individuals and groups get stuck and even abandon the process altogether” (87). This phase is when the vital characteristics of a peacemaker mentioned previously are the most needed. These traits must carry peacemakers through this vague and uncertain phase to not lose hope or faith that positive change is possible. Uyghurs need spiritual reconciliation and healing from the generational trauma they face. My project proposal is one such example of the preparation phase for an individual working towards Uyghur spiritual reconciliation. I created a project proposal for a Uyghur meditative and spiritual retreat in my thesis project. This retreat would be partly guided and focused on community bonding and healing for the Uyghur people. Over the last year of formulating this proposal, I have at times been faced with uncertainty and despair that my actions and efforts may not have an impact. During these times, I remained brave in my convictions as a peacemaker, aware of my inner thoughts and feelings, and held firm to my deep empathy for the hurt of the Uyghur people and those I had met.

Activation

Activation is the final phase of this roadmap. Salter-McNeil’s description of activation states, “the goal of this final stage is to “activate” the skills and competencies learned in the preparation phase by actively getting involved” (100). During this phase, peacemakers are actively advocating on behalf of Uyghurs. Plans are being put into motion, events are held, movements are started, and more people are made aware of what is happening to the Uyghurs. Some of these actions could create a catalytic event for others, bringing more people into the process of reconciliation. Activation could include posting information, events, and ways to help the Uyghur people on social media platforms. Salter-McNeil says that “constructive tension can be

powerful. Posting a status update or sharing an insightful link that unsettles people can be a good thing” (102). Online activism is a positive way to *activate* the lessons from previous phases.

Activation should include our civil duties as citizens. Salter-McNeil details, “Once we establish principles that are rooted in our theology and our faith, we must vote and fight for political bills, corporate and institutional policies, neighborhood ethnics and the like that reflect our faith-based principals” (103). The United States Congress passed the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act this year. This was the first act passed by the United States in advocacy for the Uyghurs, aimed at stopping goods made from Uyghur forced labor from entering the United States (congress.gov). Representative James McGovern introduced this bill. Voting for representatives who know and care about the genocide of the Uyghurs is a powerful tool at the disposal of peacemakers.

Building relationships is another crucial component of activation. Peacemakers need to build friendships with the Uyghur community to allow for copowerment and collaboration in action. Salter-McNeil states, “Those committed to reconciliation must partner with indigenous, community-based leaders and learn from them. This will require asking questions about what the problems are and also being active participants in the community” (104). Building these partnerships makes it difficult for peacemakers to step away from their activism when things get complicated. Furthermore, contact between groups helps to reduce prejudice both implicitly and explicitly (Everett). These friendships should ignite the empathy within peacemakers and ensure that the work towards reconciliation continues.

Conclusion

The Uyghur people are in a dire position. In China, they are being tortured and subjugated to reeducation and forced labor camps. Abroad, they are being detained and deported back to

China. In the United States, they face generational trauma and despair. The Uyghur people need brave, self-aware, and empathic peacemakers to help work towards the reconciliation of the worst human rights violation of the 21st century. The roadmap in this essay provides an outline of how someone can go from utterly unaware of the Uyghur genocide to a knowledgeable advocate working towards reconciliation for the Uyghur people. Rick Love states:

Taking responsibility, lovingly reproofing, accepting reproof, asking for forgiveness, and forgiving others describe the core competencies of peacemaking. But there is more. Jesus pushes us beyond our communities into a broken, often angry, world. (10)

There will always be hope for a better tomorrow in our shared and broken world as long as there are brave, self-aware, and empathetic peacemakers in the world.

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