Theory to Practice: Peace Practice Alliance

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In 2019, Euphrates Institute embarked on a process to clarify and strengthen our purpose amidst evolving conflicts in the world and a growing global interest in our work. From this, Euphrates claimed its mission to equip, connect, and uplift peacebuilders worldwide. At the time, the peace leaders involved in Euphrates shared their desire for more resources, connections, and certification in peacebuilding. After deep listening, reflection, and collective imagination, the Peace Practice Alliance (PPA) emerged as Euphrates' direct response to the call made by our community of peace leaders.

The Peace Practice Alliance is a core program in serving our mission and actualizing our vision of a future in which all humanity chooses and practices peace to end violence in all forms. The PPA is a six-month online peace leadership program for individuals of all backgrounds and contexts seeking to integrate peace practice into their personal and professional lives with the support of a peer community. Through self-paced learning on an interactive platform, live group sessions, and experiential exercises, participants explore personal, interpersonal, community, and global peace practices and their interconnections. The program is designed to learn and reflect on each realm, with each module expanding to the bigger picture of integral peace leadership. The program culminates in the integration of these areas, and how we practice peace leadership throughout our personal and professional lives.

Integral Peace Leadership Inspiration

The Euphrates team designed the program with the integral peace leadership model as inspiration and its guiding framework. In its simplest reasoning – it joyfully aligned. The model is rooted in, reflective of, and encapsulates what generations before us have said, done, and guided in the practices and movements of justice, peacebuilding, spirituality, sustainability, and social change – movements we believe to be inherently intertwined. In thinking of how to highlight, uplift, and live into this powerful interconnectedness, the integral peace leadership model provided (1) language and structure to communicate and demonstrate interconnection that is nuanced yet clear; (2) room to engage in head space and heart space; and (3) a framework that is focused yet expansive and adaptable to people around the world. That alignment offered an 'aha!' moment of clarity, a beautiful synchronicity of pieces coming together, for us to reinvigorate our approach to peace education and accompaniment with our growing community.

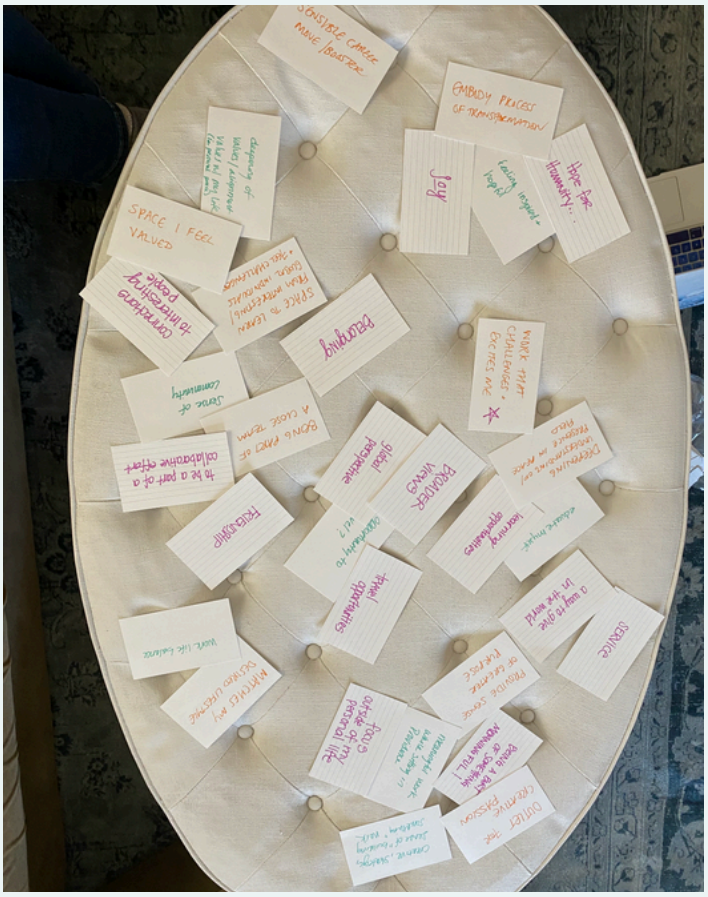


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The process of designing this program began like so many other creations - with a giant piece of paper, markers, and a group of eager minds and hearts ready to create. We wrote, drew, doodled, mapped, and ultimately flowed together theories, practices, resources, exercises, inspirations, growth areas, curiosities, dreams, and more - each an ingredient that we wanted to include in an experience for peace leaders. We overlaid the integral peace leadership model with Euphrates' founding approach of "inform, inspire, transform" to create a general structure, mapped each experience ingredient into the structure to create an initial flow, and ensured we allowed spaciousness for participants' questions, discovery, and emergence.



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What We've Accomplished

Euphrates launched the PPA pilot program in 2020 during the start of the COVID-19 pandemic with 17 individuals across 10 countries, providing both a space of steadfast commitment to peace practice amidst a global crisis, and a space of nourishment, connection, belonging, and sense of home amidst individual isolation. The PPA began with no secured funding or staffing model, only a small group of committed individuals eager to create and see what would emerge. Now in 2024, marking 5 years of the PPA, Euphrates has trained 163 peace leaders from 50 countries and is growing a global community of everyday peacebuilders. We have provided seed funding grants to 82 peace projects led by PPA graduates, reaching 31 countries. We have a thriving alumni community that stays active through ongoing communications, continued education, and collaboration.

Throughout the five years, participants have experienced significant increases in their understanding of and confidence in applying peace leadership theories and practices. Participants have experienced significant changes as a result of the PPA, including and not limited to deeper connection to self and improved well-being, greater commitment to action and enhanced peace practices, improved leadership and interpersonal skills, greater sense of community and support, increased sense of purpose and direction, and broadened perspective of global systems.



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These transformations in perspective, behavior, and connection are powerful, and directly linked to integral peace leadership's definition of, "individual and collective action...to challenge violence and aggression and create positive, just change." Together we're building a global community, a living system, dedicated to both our own individual actions and our collective efforts to end violence in all forms. We witness this as participants cultivate cross-continental friendships and support each other's ongoing well-being, as participants take initiative to meet each other after the program and deepen relationships, and as they develop international partnerships and collaborations to transform shared struggles. We are in awe every day at the depth, beauty, integrity, relationship, shared power, hope, resilience, and courage of PPA peace leaders.

Through this experience, we have maintained learning as a core value and practice. We have and continue to learn a lot about incorporating a theoretical model of peace leadership into a practical, community-based leadership program, and how to design and lead a program that is useful for peacebuilders from a multitude of contexts around the world. Some key lessons we've learned include:

Personal Peace Practice

Euphrates believes that each person's commitment to practices of inner work and personal well-being, rooted in self-reflection and contemplative practice, is foundational to practicing peace. This practice leads to continual individual growth, healing, and transformation that nourishes relationships and communities. Reaffirmed through participant feedback, the PPA emphasizes personal peace practice as a throughline in the program, continuously supporting each participant to tend to their practice. We support each individual to reflect on their own personal peace practices, process experiences that impede their individual practice, and continuously nourish their well-being, self-worth, and self-love.

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Trust

We prioritize and invest in building trust with participants. We aim to create an intimate environment where participants are partners, there is no expert or teacher-student dynamic. The wisdom already exists in the room and we nourish the space for it to surface and be shared and practiced together and to invite leadership of participants.

Adaptability and Collaboration

With each cohort being a unique group of peace leaders from wide-ranging identities, contexts, goals, and more, we set a strong foundation for the value, dignity, and contribution of every person in the room. While there is a structure participants enter into, we embrace co-creation and collaboration with real-time feedback that uplifts the gifts of the diverse experiences and identities of a given cohort.

Personalization

We intentionally create diverse modalities for learning and engagement, tailoring to different learning and processing styles, and providing an accepting environment that meets individuals where they are in their peace leadership journey. We deeply invest in collaboratively translating a theory into a practical prompt or exercise for participants to reflect on themselves and their context. We intentionally invite the cohort to apply what we're learning directly to themselves as individuals and their communities, immediately putting theory into personally resonant practice.

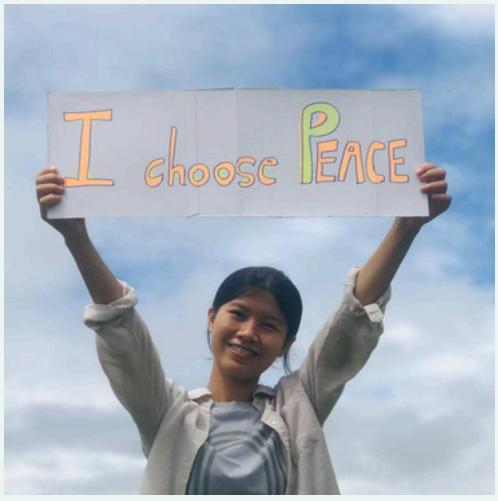
An Invitation

At Euphrates we believe we all have the capacity to choose peace. We invite others - organizations, scholars, practitioners, and everyday individuals - curious about and interested in integral peace leadership to partner, advocate, and connect with us and together build and nourish a global movement of peace practice.

INSPIRING HUMANITY TO CHOOSE PEACE

To learn more about Euphrates Institute and to get involved, visit our website at www.euphrates.org.







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