

Caux 2013: Healing History, overcoming racism, seeking equity, building community.

On behalf of Initiatives of Change International I would also like to welcome you to Caux for this important conference. It is a bit risk expressing a preference out of all the important conferences that take place here – but I have to be honest and say that my heart skipped a beat when I heard about this conference; as it intersects with some of my personal passions and interests. You have already heard from Andrew some of the history of this amazing house. I hope you will take more time while you are here to discover more of this history and hear the stories of people who have been inspired by Caux to be courageous change-makers in many parts of the world and in a variety of vocations.

I first came here as a medical student at the age of 21. At the time there was an important conference going on: attended by over 400 people who were leaders, diplomats, senior people – a lot of important people discussing the issue of dialogue and reconciliation. A lot was going on to keep the conference organizers occupied and busy. I arrived with another student in the evening and after registering it was suggested we go down to supper after our long trip. By the time we arrived the dining room was empty, everyone had gone back to a plenary meeting and a few people were left in the kitchen that produced supper just for the two of us. A continental omelet arrived but the person who served it immediately turned to me and said that I should wait as another omelet was being prepared for me that did not have any ham to comply with my dietary requirements as I was Muslim. I was completely bowled over that in the midst of this conference with so many important people, someone somewhere had taken time to just think that I needed a special meal and had gone to the trouble of preparing it.

A number of things struck me when I first came to Caux:

1. I caught a real glimpse of a diverse community that cut across divides of culture, religion, enmity and barriers of history working together to create a better world – seeing it here, made me feel it was really possible to work to create this real community wherever I was.

2. It made me realize that to build a different world where everyone is valued, secure and fulfilled – you need to combine big thinking with take small steps to be part of a critical mass that applies the theory into practice on a daily basis before you could even take it wider afield.

3. It brought home to me that to create a better world we needed to work at both grass roots level as well as political level in a creative collaboration to find solutions. It was not just politicians and leaders who need to find solutions. Everyone is responsible and important if we wanted to enshrine equity, dignity for all and meet the basic needs of everyone in our communities.

4. It reinforced my belief that the way I choose to live my life with integrity and values was a prerequisite for anything I wanted to do professionally in my community and in the wider world.

Initiatives of Change, is a worldwide movement of people of diverse cultures and backgrounds who are committed to the transformation of society through changes in human motives and behavior, starting with their own. Our mission is to inspire, equip and connect like-minded people who wish to address world issues through the same approach.

The Caux conferences each summer continue to serve as a home for the world – a common space where people from all cultures and all walks of life can come together to seek answers to the world's challenges, starting with themselves. The conference themes intersect with the key focus areas of our national and international work: Trust building, ethical leadership and sustainable living.

The theme of this conference is Healing History: overcoming racism, seeking equity, building community. At the age of 21 I made a decision that I wanted my life to serve two vocations that I am passionate about: the first is my medical vocation as a paediatrician and the second is a passion to build bridges of understanding between different culture, races and religions. I am who I am: an Egyptian, Arab, British, Muslim, professional woman living in the west. I know a lot about stereotypes, racism, prejudice, inequity and barriers to community.

We can't escape who we are and the lens through which we see the world around us. But we tend to judge ourselves by our ideals and others by their actions. To create equity and community we need to go beyond our own identities. We need to look at the "good, the bad and the ugly" of our own group and also learn more about ourselves through the way others see us. To move beyond our natural tendencies we needed to: understand ourselves, our feelings and reactions better; have honest conversations with others to shatter our stereotypes of each other and build trust. But we can't afford to stop there. We need to move beyond dialogue and trust to look at the wider world needs to see how we can work together to address them.

Over the coming days, Caux can help us individually and collectively – in both our inward search and our outward search. At the heart of lofC and Caux's approach are four elements:

1. Taking time to reflect and seek inner wisdom to discover the inner tools that can unlock the creative potential in each person
2. Examining our own motives and behavior to develop a culture of moral integrity in our own personal lives – increasing our credibility.
3. Reaching out in dialogue to build authentic relationships with others that move us beyond our stereotypes and judgment of others to build trust.
4. Searching together for the focused action we can take individually and collectively to meet local and global needs.

"What I see is this constant thematic of personal change to bring about social and global change – easy to say, hard to do. But unless we are refreshed in that mission by coming to oases capable of providing that water then we lose sight of both the spirit and power of that mission" - quote from Prime Minister Kevin Rudd after visiting Caux last year.

In these days together exploring the theme of healing history, creating equity and building community – I hope you will take enough time to be refreshed in this oasis that is Caux - through reflection and quiet, through storytelling and dialogue – so that we can find the inspiration for the common tasks we take on together.

If I had to identify one tool, that I have discovered through Caux and IofC, that is a treasure beyond measure and a springboard for inner nourishment, inspiration and action it is this practice of inner silence and reflection.

“In silence there is eloquence. Stop weaving and see how the pattern improves” Rumi

Omnia Marzouk