



11-1999

### Conclusion

Frank O. Blechman

Follow this and additional works at: <https://nsuworks.nova.edu/pcs>



Part of the [Peace and Conflict Studies Commons](#)

---

#### Recommended Citation

Blechman, Frank O. (1999) "Conclusion," *Peace and Conflict Studies*: Vol. 6 : No. 1 , Article 7.

DOI: 10.46743/1082-7307/1999.1201

Available at: <https://nsuworks.nova.edu/pcs/vol6/iss1/7>

This Back Matter is brought to you for free and open access by the Peace & Conflict Studies at NSUWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Peace and Conflict Studies by an authorized editor of NSUWorks. For more information, please contact [nsuworks@nova.edu](mailto:nsuworks@nova.edu).

---

## Conclusion

### Abstract

#### Excerpt

We, the editors of this Issue, began by saying that both the concept of conflict resolution and social justice are used in multiple ways. We noted that some forms or definitions of each seemed to exclude the other.

**Keywords:** *conflict resolution, Jim Laue, social justice, Society for Professional in Dispute Resolution (SPIDR), transformative mediation*

#### Author Bio(s)

Frank O. Blechman is Coordinator of the M.S. Degree Program of Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution and teaches clinical skills courses.

## CONCLUSION

**Frank O. Blechman**

We, the editors of this Issue, began by saying that both the concept of conflict resolution and social justice are used in multiple ways. We noted that some forms or definitions of each seemed to exclude the other.

If nothing else, the essays here illustrate that the concepts are NOT incompatible. Each writer asserts, in his or her own way, that the tension between justice and conflict resolution is a positive source of energy for devotees of either field. Indeed, they reaffirm Jim Laue's central premise which so inspired those of us who followed him. These stories collectively reaffirm that the authors and editors, like Laue, believe that

- making justice often requires change, and conflict resolution is one powerful approach to making durable change; change not based on trauma which forms the foundation for future conflict. Or, stated more elegantly,
- peace and justice are each ultimately impossible without the other.

When Jim Laue asserted this connection 25 years ago, most of the field of conflict resolution viewed him as something of a radical, a title he proudly wore. At the same time, when he asserted that conflict resolution was an honorable profession, many in the field of social justice viewed him with suspicion, as something of a moderate accommodator, a title he firmly rejected. He knew that he was a conflict resolver, and a sociologist, and an advocate for social justice, and not neutral on issues of human dignity. If he could be all of these, so could the fields in which he lived and practiced.

Today, the idea that peace and justice are one field, one idea, one practice, indeed one goal, is no longer such a radical idea. Many practitioners from each side recognize the kinship with the other. "No peace, no justice!" became a rallying cry in the social upheaval and riots after the initial acquittal of police officers charged with Rodney's King's beating in 1993. Today, even conservative Catholics echo Pope Paul VI dictum, "If you want peace, work for justice." It is no stretch to recognize that if a society wants peace and justice, it must non-violently resolve its conflicts.

The mainline organizations in conflict resolution are approaching this same issue from other side. Conferences of mainline organizations such as Society for Professional in Dispute Resolution (SPIDR) no longer focus exclusively on "settlement," or "management" of conflict. Conferences are no longer dominated by workshops on strategies to increase billing rates. In the last five years, SPIDR members have struggled to integrate ideas about "transformative mediation" which insist that conflict intervenors have ethical responsibilities promote changes which transcend immediate disputes. The 1999 SPIDR conference features a team of radical psychologists as keynote speakers who advocate intense confrontation and conflict as the path the path to personal and social change.

Nonetheless, if Laue's ideas are no longer heretical, they are not exactly orthodox dogma either. Many in each field still practice in arenas, which make them suspicious of, if not hostile to the other. Jim would likely say that we still need more "demonstration projects" to help people see how the two fields can and should work together.

In his life, Jim Laue had the good fortune to find work which brought these two ideals closer together. Working for the US Department of Justice in the 1960s, he created communication channels and even conflict resolution between advocates for change in the civil rights movement and defenders of the status quo in the deep South. Later, as co-chair of the Campaign for the US Academy of Peace, he was able to bring US Senators and grassroots activists together. In practice, he often intentionally chose to work on public issues in which significant differences in power, knowledge, race, religion, or class permeated the conflicts. Repeatedly throughout his career, he saw ordinary people develop extraordinary resolutions to tough conflicts, which reaffirmed his faith in people's ability to do so, and in his own ability to help them. These cases reaffirmed his view of the conflict resolver as an agent of social justice. Further, they reaffirmed his theories about change as a continuous quest rather than a "quick-fix" process.

Deep structural social change requires courage and hope. People in conflict are often long on the former and short on the latter. Jim Laue was a hopeful man who brought hope to people who saw few alternatives to their conflicts. He acknowledged legitimated and reinforced their courage. As the rest of us in the fields of social justice, peacemaking and conflict resolution work to integrate our field(s), we should not forget his example, or his experience.

The stories told here affirm that, linked or not, peace and justice will always co-evolve. Insights into one will have implications for the other. Whether secular, religious, intellectual or academic, all of us have to plant one foot in each camp. Those of us not raised in youth to perform this delicate balancing act will need training, practice, and more good role models to follow.