

Jules Brown

“Creating a Workable World” Conference Report

Attendees rise together and begin to speak the words of Joseph Schwartzberg. A gentleman, bearded with graying hair and glasses, and seated in a brown, metal folding chair begins to play a stringed instrument. He is accompanied by a woman with reddish-brown hair who joins the musical interlude with her own singing. This is an affirmation of human oneness, and people have traveled far and wide to attend the “Creating a Workable World” Conference in order to consider and support a hopeful optimism for a better future.

The experience of attending such a conference is undoubtedly invaluable, not only for a student of political science or anthropology but also for any person interested in exploring new ideas and possibilities for achieving a more “workable world”. It is a conference demonstrative of humanistic potential and an effort to seek alternative solutions to the multitude of issues that affect the day-to-day lives of citizens around the globe to the broader challenges that influence the international system at large.

I attended the conference thanks to the generosity of Citizens for Global Solutions, and it was there that I was introduced to a number of scholars and peers with impactful ideas to challenge and change the way world politics currently operate. As a student of international relations and one that focuses on critical theory, the speakers addressed a number of problems that I have come to recognize through my own studies. In particular, the work of Robert C. Johansen piqued my interest with his presentation of a United Nations Emergency Peace Service. The concept spoke to the failure of the international community to live up to its promise of

“never again” and continues to build upon the Responsibility to Protect doctrine and a recognition of the importance of the world as a global community that is invariably interconnected. As the iconic quote of Martin Luther King, Jr. goes, “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”

This was the theme of “Creating a Workable World” -- to address the injustices and inequities that continue to stifle the potential of a global governance toward a global community. However, it was not only an effort to bring to light and examine the problematics of the current system. It was also a concerted effort to explore a variety of solutions and ways in which students, scholars, and every citizen can affect change. While each solution presented is still not without flaws -- as demonstrated by the question posed by one attendee, who asked what would prevent corruption of the system envisioned by Schwartzberg and other proponents of alternatives to the current global system -- it was a meeting of minds to think through the possibilities rather than simply point out problems. The latter is an unfortunate problem endemic to some actors within this field.

Admittedly, I approached the conference and its premise hesitant and with skepticism. I am, more often than not, a cynic and pessimist when it comes to matters of cooperation and a more humanity-oriented approach toward global governance. Yet, the experience of attending the conference as one of the youth essay winners presented an opportunity to witness the hard work and effort of not only an entire auditorium of people speaking of themselves as citizens of the world and members of the human family; it was an opportunity to witness and learn from a movement toward a better future.

I came away from the conference with a better understanding of the possible solutions being presented to address the issues that are recognizably damaging and and potentially damning of the current system. I had the fortuity to meet several people with the wherewithal to seek change and to observe their actions to achieve it. While my cynicism still remains, it is perhaps dampened by the knowledge that there are actors actively trying to bring about a more workable world.