NEWS

A child of war turned peacemaker

Dr. Harry Anastasiou invested his life to the cause of peace

Maggi White

Dr. Harry Anastasiou grew up when conflict between the Greeks and the Turks was a way of life on his home island of Cyprus. He wondered why any parent would want their children to inherit the life of war and mistrust in society. Why can’t there be peace instead of war, asks the teacher who has taught conflict resolution to Portland State graduate students in international studies since 2002. He has some insightful ideas on how to achieve peace. Should President Obama meet this man? As a peace scholar, he was one of the leaders in the early ‘90s who supported an open dialogue between the different ethnic communities in Cyprus. He “envisioned an environment that is peaceful” to emerge from the discussions through relationship building and addressing root problems with wisdom and action. People first have to understand how conflict impacts human behavior and think how conflict shapes a society. Violence alienates people. Lethal behavior is the most undemocratic form of relationships, Anastasiou said. He cited the European example, which hasn’t seen serious conflict since World War II. “They have a different concept,” which is security based on democratic principles and the rule of law. They have worked on relationship building, reconciling what is in the national interest. Peace is national security, he said. He believes a country asserts peace as a priority, it can shape the attitudes and actions that influence policy, leading a willingness to engage in peaceful dialogue. Belligerence, Anastasiou said, is based on the false notion that it is the only way to get what you want. “History disproves this. An ‘us vs. them’ approach galvanizes and increases the determination of your adversary and lethal behavior empowers the hardliners. It’s what happened after 9/11 and in the Middle East all the time,” Anastasiou said.

In Jerusalem, which is a place of rest and peace, if you fight, there is no Jerusalem. It cannot be a sacred city with killing and destruction,” he said. He explained the way conflict is further enhanced when there is a religious interpretation introduced. Each side cites God as being on their side. That is the danger of linking religion to nationalism. He cited the European example, which hasn’t seen serious conflict since World War II. “They have a different concept, which is security based on democratic principles and the rule of law. They have worked on relationship building, reconciling what is in the national interest. Peace is national security,” he said. He believes that every country asserts peace as a priority, it can shape the attitudes and actions that influence policy, leading a willingness to engage in peaceful dialogue. Belligerence, Anastasiou said, is based on the false notion that it is the only way to get what you want.

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Anastasiou, referencing the 2008 presidential election, advised that whoever was going to answer that 3 a.m. phone call had better be capable of judging whether to wage war or large conflict. He favors policies that reinforce, reward and empower all actions that deescalate conflict.

Big powers should reward and support actions toward conciliation, problem solving and mediating relationships. It is the only approach, super power can under take without bringing polarized and creating a world of friends and enemies,” he said. He observed how the people of Cyprus became less trusting, and more hateful. Values were eroding and he posed the question “Do we want hatred to be part of our culture, not to trust, to injure, to have a conflict-habituated people?” Anastasiou, who is Greek, lives his beliefs.

At Portland State he has befriended Dr. Bidrol YesHad, a Turk, who teaches at the Hatfield School of Government and is chair of Turkish Studies. They do research together. Anastasiou spends two weeks in September teaching in Cyprus and takes students abroad for internships and involvement in peace-making activities. He has authored two academic books: both titled The Broken Olive Branch, which focuses on nationalism, ethnic conflict and peace building in Cyprus.

He and his wife have two sons, both in their 20s, who are graduate students at Portland State.

Debate team closes out dominant run

Portland State wins three of 15 tournaments this year

Mariah Frye-Kolos

With the tournament season having recently ended, the Portland State debate team can now sit back and relax after competing in 15 tournaments.

The team traveled to far reaching places including the World Universities Debating Tournament in Ireland, the Oxford University Debating Tournament in England, where PSU teams made it to the quarter finals competing against colleges from all over Europe and the United States—and the United States National Debating Traveling, the team meets weekly to practice and share ideas. They debate subjects that are generally more abstract than those they would normally debate, but claim they are no less important.

"We write briefs almost weekly, arguing both sides of any given topic and listing those arguments. Many socio-economic topics seem to pop up as do other current affairs. For example one question we reviewed was whether honouring a human right is right, said Kelly Welch, a recent Portland State graduate and political science major. Welch is the co-coordinator of the debate team along with Dana Hawthorne, a 20-year-old economics major. "I have learned more through debate than any other class or activity," Welch said. "I learned to speak and organize our thoughts in an essay format for debate. Also speaking confidence is much higher," Welch said.

Welch and Hawthorne comprise one of the many two-person teams within the Portland State debate team. Each team gets a chance to debate at any given tournament. Starting with prelims teams are scored one through four, being the least desirable and possibly leading to elimination. If a team succeeds to make it through all rounds, they must compete in finals against two teams and with one other team. Again they are scored on a one to four scale. Their score in finals is their rank, for the tournament.