

Kluwer Mediation Blog

Make mediation, not war

Andrea Maia (Mediar360 – Dispute Resolution) · Tuesday, March 8th, 2022

According to the Wikipedia, “Make love, not war” is an anti-war slogan commonly associated with the American counterculture of the 1960s. It was used primarily by those who were opposed to the Vietnam War, but it has been invoked in other anti-war contexts around the world since then. The part of the slogan – “make love” – often referred to the practice of free love that was growing among the American youth to denounce marriage as a tool for those who supported war and favored the traditional capitalist culture.

This slogan which also inspired [John Lenon’s famous music](#) inspired me today as well because much has been said in Brazil about the peace building culture . By looking at [UNESCO’s data](#) it’s easy to figure why .

“Violence is one of the issues that cause the most significant concern in Brazilian society. Rates of violence and lack of security, especially in larger urban areas, have increased in the last couple of decades. Homicides are one of the leading causes of death among men, and the main cause of death among youth between 15 and 39 years of age. Black men are the majority of violence victims.

From 1980 to 2002, Brazil reported 696,056 deaths from homicides 4 – a number that could be considered one of the most alarming in the world among countries with no civil war taking place.

Homicides in the age group of 0 to 19 years account for 16% (111,369) of that total. Most of the cases, 87.6% (97,559) are found in the age group of 15 to 19 year-olds.”

These are just some of the data that draw attention in a country whose population is over 200 million inhabitants and where almost 100 million cases have been filed. As a conflict resolution expert, I can’t help to insist on the greater need for Brazilians to be better educated as to understand the importance of the following topics;

- 1) conflict can be something positive;
- 2) the starting point for a shift in cultural paradigm is to avoid imposition, exclusion or physical violence as a means of resolving resolve a conflicts;
- 3) the importance of learning peaceful conflict resolution at the earliest stage in one’s life (since elementary grade, for instance).

All in all, the good news is that we already see a considerable number of schools investing in mediation both in terms of teaching and as a tool for better relationships in the school community.

Schools have started to develop in students the ability to relate better and that by acknowledging anger, taking a favorable action.

They are being encouraged to develop soft skills in situations familiar to them such as when a friend refuses to share a toy and they can't have it back without getting into a friendly conversation. Instead they tend to bite or hit the other child. Moments as such are good ones to bring the stimulus for the culture of peace, at its roots. Hence the importance of teachers, parents and school principals mastering these skills.

In this respect, Brazilians also have good examples. One of these is known as “Cuca Legal” and was developed by a Brazilian psychiatrist that I admire a lot, Rodrigo Bressan. The emphasis is on the importance of the development of soft skills for the healthy growth and learning of children who in turn by having these skills can better modulate school performance.

Having positive attributes and soft skills in childhood will make a difference in the individual's future. Attributes such as responsibility, sociability with other children, understanding group functioning, all these skills enhance school performance.

Fortunately, Brazilian teaching professionals are becoming more and more aware of the importance of encouraging cooperation and understanding as early as from childhood period. After all, it is there that we are learning to deal with our emotions and the different ways of dealing with conflict.

I conclude with the motto that inspired me with an updated version aligned with my desire that our young people embrace the idea of “Make Mediation, Not War”! And may this concept spread to other countries!

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