

2015 Educateurs sans Frontières Assembly – NOTES

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Topic: Transcription of Lynne Lawrence's Opening Remarks

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The following are unedited notes from talks or discussions held at the 2015 AMI Educateurs sans Frontières (EsF) Assembly, Thailand, August 2015. The notes have been prepared to enable EsF participants and other interested parties to reflect on and utilise some of the ideas, principles and practices discussed. The notes are not in any form suitable for professional publishing and may include spelling, grammatical and other errors. The notes may not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Association Montessori Internationale (AMI). The notes have been distributed in this form to expedite availability. The copyright for the notes is held by AMI and the original author, if specified. The notes can be distributed on condition that this disclaimer and copyright notice is included. We thank the presenters, volunteers and translators for all their work in capturing the work of the 2015 EsF Assembly in written form.

(Before video begins, Lynne was covering housekeeping items and so Fay was introduced. Lynne described what items Fay had on hand to support the Assembly.)

For example, we have first aid on hand. We have many, many things that we can help you with, so feel free to ask.

Sitting beside Fay, very quietly but I can tell you very industriously, is Megan Tyne. Megan Tyne is in charge of international projects around the world for AMI, but she is also in her own right the Executive Director of Montessori Australia Foundation. So she is one of those people where she does a sort of 48 hour day in order to do the things that she does. Megan Tyne is also the expert in communications for us, so we are very happy to have her here, and thank you.

Applause

Let me talk health. Water. Those of you who are not used to living in countries where water is scarce, please only drink bottled water. Do not clean your teeth with the tap, or anything else like that. Please use bottled water and in turn it is appropriate to use a straw or a glass and not to drink out of the top of the bottle. Although they say to me that is becoming more common, I think we would rather not stay on the more common side. So let us observe the tradition of drinking our water with a straw. But there is plenty of water. If you are running out in your rooms, they will simply provide you with more water. So feel free to ask for water.

Those of you again who are not used to very hot countries, mosquitos. Mosquitos are out and about and they are particularly out and about when the sun goes down. So have in your bag some kind of mosquito repellent, whether it is very strong and disgusting or rather lovely and homeopathic. Whatever it is that

you use, please make sure that you are not being bitten. If you are bitten, however, find Fay, because Fay has homeopathic antidote for your bites. She will certainly help you with anything that is on that front. Do be careful of the water and the mosquitos.

There will be an official photograph on Friday, because on Friday is the only day when we have absolutely everybody that we need together. We are going to be joined by just a few more people and on Friday. So Friday, depending on how you want to be viewed in the future when you look back at the website and look at yourself, that is the Friday you. As you know we are being constantly caught, so let's hope that we are not caught in any compromising conditions of any stage while we are here.

You probably know that we have got some visits planned. We have actually got two sets of visits, they have expanded a little since we first planned. On Friday we are having a talk by Dr. Preenut (sp). Now Dr. Pr is the main instigator of a project for the government. This is a wonderful project that she has been doing. The project is really all about being able to sort of to live sustainably. So, in this project we are going to listen to Dr. Pr, but then we are hopefully going to go visit a school, a primary school, that is espousing those educational principles. So that will be something interesting to look at. She thinks they are very similar to Montessori principles. So that will be on Friday.

On Saturday, each of you will be go and visit two of the local Montessori schools. You will be delighted to know that they are not only opening their doors, but the children are coming back. So there will be six buses. You will each be on a bus and your bus will take you to two schools. We will all meet together at lunchtime at the training center where we will again see the abbot and also have a chance to view the training center.

In the afternoon, on Saturday, we are visiting another kind of project. This is the princess's project, am I right Kannekar? May I ask Kannekar please to stand up? This is Kannekar Butt. She has done all the arraigning here in Thailand. When I say all the arranging, she has spearheaded the arraignments, and then she has had a lot of help people helping her and from Pam Statton, and Christine and Bill. Thank you.

So we will be visiting the queen's project in the afternoon. That is a project about craftwork. So you will be visiting a place where the traditional crafts are in evidence and being made. So that could also be for those who like that sort of thing a possible shopping trip. So Saturday is a totally busy day.

Sunday is a totally free day. You can do what you like. However, if you would like to go out, you have a big list of things you could see. If you could let the front office know, and Fay will have a set of papers out so because again, the hotel will actually organize the transport. It would be helpful if say six of you wanted to go to a certain place and they can organize the transport for you. I am not suggesting that you get together with six, but it would be obviously helpful not to have one person go and they another person to say I wanted to go and then to have empty cars going backwards and forth. So Sunday is a free day.

Could you also please let us know at the same time that you decide where you are going, what meals you would like to have at the hotel that day? I think it is only fair to the family that is being so kind and helpful to us that we don't have them over catering for us that day. So if you know you are going to be out for lunch and dinner, or if you are going to be in for lunch and dinner, just let us know those two things then we can there is going to be approximately twenty for lunch or sixty for lunch that day. So that is for Sunday. Thank you.

The family that runs this hotel, am sure you will agree with me, are absolutely delightful. They really are. They have done nothing but to ask if everything was alright and help us. Now I want you to know their names. So we have the gentleman who is the owner/manager of it is called Pock and his wife who is helping us, as you saw with the coffees, is called On. Pock and On. And their daughter's name is Tam. And their son's name is Ing. So Pock, and On, and Tam and Ing. And they were entertaining us and

playing beautiful music for us, so I know that you would want to talk to them by name. Those are their names.

Please wear your badges at least for awhile, until we are all sure who we are. Although I think after this morning we got a pretty good idea of who everybody is and what they do.

All right moving on. We have got too much technology.

Okay so what are we going to be doing during the day? When we have a speaker, in the main the speaker will be generally in the morning. Unless you see there are two speakers, in which case we will not have one after the other. We will have one in the morning and one in the afternoon. So where you see a day with a speaker, that speaker will usually start the morning and/or start in the afternoon.

Now, how long will a speaker take? I don't know. I don't know. The speaker themselves will take the time that they need. When they are finished, we will have breakout sessions and discussions. We may have readings. We may do things on the basis of what we heard. And so you will find that as the days go by, yes, some of the time choose readings to go and read collectively and discuss to focus on essential principles of Montessori and how they are going to travel into the work that we do beyond. Sometimes we are going to talk about interesting topics that have come up. For example, we have got some people here who have done transformational education. Is that right? Some people might say I'd like to know more about that. We may decide, let's put on something for people interested in that.

There are many of you with interesting ideas, or topics, or projects. We will have days when you can have choice as to who you are going to listen to and who you are going to talk to. But we would like you to tell us what you want rather than us actually each time telling you. So, the days will be a mixture of thoughts. The days will be a mixture of discussions. There will be a mixture of producing something that we can share at the end of the day to move our ideas and our work on. We don't want the ideas simply to come into the ether, be experienced and enjoyed and disappear out. We have to come back at the end of the day and say, "So, what is it that we are going to do with this work that we did today?" How is this going to help us to move forward in our work as Educateurs? And get the kinds of ideas that are going to help the whole movement experience.

And so, not only will you be pursuing your own personal development; not only will you be gathering the information that you came to learn, but we are going to ask to please contribute to a collective endeavor. We want this collective endeavor to thread its way throughout the days of the program. We are going to ask this assembly to use the collective wisdom that it has to help us shape EsF so that it becomes sustainable. That is our first week's work, and innovative. That is our second week's work. We need to find a way to allow this beautiful thing that is emerging and growing to become something this is there for the future. Strong and solid. Provides an umbrella for the many to find sustenance from, but creates in itself a power to be influential, to stretch people's understanding of what Montessori is and how it can be applied, and to truly become the social reform movement that Dr. Maria Montessori herself envisioned when she first began her work.

We have to come now full circle. She started as a social reformer. We as a movement followed her. As a movement we then consolidated ourselves, but in that consolidation, which was a natural part of the cycle, in that consolidation one can find that one becomes smaller than one was intended to be. The movement itself focuses in the consolidation by becoming concentrated, perhaps too much, on school.

Now is our moment, the EsF moment, to take this beautiful concept of how to live a life, how to support a life, how to affect social change, and take it through the EsF channel and all its depth of understanding and quality and out into the wider world in which it can make impact on the lives of children. So I hope, and I will connect this at the end, I do hope that some of you at least would be willing to share, and to think, and to brainstorm and to lay down some foundations during these next ten days, because we

could do something incredible. We could truly not only serve ourselves, but serve the whole movement. And I am not talking about the AMI movement. I am talking about the Montessori movement and children. That is the movement we have to serve. We need to create something that is going to be a jewel that can be shared. A pearl that has many, many pearls to share. Something that we can create.

So I am going to ask you in and amongst all the other wonderful things that we do, if you would be willing to drive it forward. It is and it could be in your hands, and your shaping, and your foundational work that we could really begin to build this. So that next year, or the year after that, when we have another EsF, we are not sitting back and asking ourselves the same questions. We come up with a new mission and something greater to give. So that is the collective request that we have for some of you.

So what are we hoping will actually come out of this EsF in more practical terms? What are we going to actually do? Well, while you're here we are going to build a new website. Does that sound exciting? We are. We are going to build a new website that we think needs to communicate better what EsF is and how it is and how it does it. And it is in your hands. You can help us do that. We think we will have it sort of fundamentally operational in about three or four days. We are going to be loading everything we collect up to it so that it will be almost live transmission of the things that we are doing. So we will try as best we can to do that. So, that is one of the things we are going to try and do.

We have the official photographs, but we are going to ask you please to also take your own because you will be in all sorts of situations that just one wonderful photographer can't find. I am going to ask you to feed them back to the Facebook page. We have a Facebook page, right Fay? AMI-EsF. If you can't find it than ask Fay. She has already gotten it up on the Facebook that we have met yesterday. We can feed it onto the Facebook page and keep that alive and going so others can take part in it.

We have a video camera, and we would like you to volunteer each day to take that camera and interview someone and get their story. We want you to capture other people's stories. Think of the stories we wanted to hear so much about this morning. Without the stories, EsF cannot demonstrate exactly the power of people who think outside of the box. Outside of the box with the principles. That is a fantastic thing. So we are going to ask you everyday, "Who wants the camera? Who is going to do the interviewing?" And you can pass it around all day long, just to see how many people we can capture. Then we are going to load them up. And then we will have people talking about what they are doing and how they are doing it on the website. Right Megan?

Eventually.

So the stories can be told, because collectively our stories are powerful. Collectively our stories can help each other. When you go to talk to someone about what you are doing and you show them the website, listen to what those people are doing, that is who we are. We are EsF! We are this body of people in the world who are doing this kind of work.

We would like someone every day to volunteer to just write a summary of the day. So right at the very end, someone who can write a piece, not a great poem or anything like that, but a beautiful piece just to say this is what happened today. So we have a diary of the impact of just the sorts of things that occurred.

We are also going to ask you to create notes. We are looking for a place to put post-it notes. You know when you suddenly think, "They should do this," or "I want to remember that." We will have post it notes so that we can begin to gather some of the ideas that you have. So that it will become an ideas wall. We will see what ideas we have on the ideas wall by the end of our two weeks together.

We have an ideas tree. You see the tree at the back there? It is a very colorful, beautiful Thai tree. Now in Thailand, they are usually used to gather money for donations. We are going to ask you if you are not in a

group that is thinking about how EsF work for the future, and you have an idea, I am going to ask you to put the idea in the tree. Just write a piece of note and say, "I think you should do this," or "How would you do that," and we will collect those ideas, and we will see if we can put them to some use as we go along.

We also have a quotes scroll. In the temple here in Thailand, they wrap a very large scroll around the pagoda. And people write their names on it or they leave a message. We have a scroll that is on the table outside. I would like to suggest that if you have a quote, or a poem they have written or something that you would like to leave behind about the experiences they're having, the thoughts they have had, and so on. They hand write the quote on the scroll and we will roll the scroll every day. So every day is a new day, and at the very end we will have twelve days of interesting quotes for us to share.

So, that is a lot of activity that is going on in and around the things we are doing. We said that we are Educateur. Being an Educateur means that everything we do is driven by a principle, is driven by a value, is driven by a system of beliefs and how one relates one to another, one to a community, one to a nation. It is about how we build trust. It is about how we listen to others. It is about the relationships that we build.

And so EsF has values. Now these values you might say, "I think we need to change them," or "Let's add a value in," or "Actually, you could take all those away and just put two things down."

These were the values that the last EsF group came up with. These were their values.

[Slide shown on the screen.]

EsF Values

Educateurs sans Frontières values initiatives that:

- Promote a culture of peace, solidarity and equality
- Maintain a clear Montessori vision of the child's contribution to social reform
- Demonstrate understanding of Montessori principles and practices with the needs of the community in mind
- Embrace community involvement and engagement in the project design and implementation
- Focus on empowerment and long term sustainability
- Embody an inclusive approach to race, ethnicity, religion, gender, language, culture and socio-economic status

They said that Educateurs sans Frontières values initiatives that: promote a culture of peace, solidarity and equality. Now the interesting thing about those words, particularly solidarity and equality, are that they seem to be the new thread that is running underneath the new sustainable development goals which are replacing the millennium goals. We have got to look at those goals. We put them in for you to have a look at, particularly goal four. That would be a bit of interest. But nevertheless, now in these new seventeen goals that have replaced the original, they have an underpinning idea and thread is coming out that was not there before is social equality. Social equality and a sense of solidarity. So let's see if we can't find a way to espouse or to work with some of the new goals that are coming out.

We say, "Maintain a clear Montessori vision of the child's contribution to social reform." Now you have to ask yourself, "What is a clear Montessori vision of the child's contribution to social reform?" That is something that we will be looking at over the next few days. What is that? What do we think that looks like? What would be expected to be? It is no use having the words without some idea as to how we think that actually plays out in practical terms in front of us.

Next, demonstrate understanding of Montessori principles and practices with the needs of the community in mind. With the needs of the community in mind. You know, it is an interesting thing, the deeper your knowledge of a theory or a principle, the more flexible you can be. If you truly are understanding something, you will never ever deviate from it, but you can be flexible in achieving it because you stick with what you know and then you find a way to serve it. When your principles are not deep and solid then you don't know what you are doing and when you are going away from it and when you are getting back from it.

From a Montessori EsF point of view, we have to study what the principles are; what the essential principles are. We are not talking about materials. We are not talking about Montessori materials here. What are talking about the essential Montessori principles that have to be met no matter where I am, what I am doing, and who I am doing it with.

We have to come to understand even what those are because otherwise our integrity will be at stake. Our integrity. We cannot have our integrity at stake. Not when we are dealing with people's lives. And that is what we are dealing with. We cannot embark upon something that isn't solid, full of integrity and a depth of principle. At that point it becomes something that serves our ego rather than serving the work and the needs of the community. Of course we have egos and we like doing the work, but we cannot serve our egos. We have to serve the children and the communities that we find ourselves in. Some of us are not with children, but in those communities you serve the needs of the people.

And so, without that understanding, when you are in a difficult situation you don't know what to hold onto. You don't know how to say, "Right, but we are not going to lose this, but what works for you?" This will still be functional, but we'll find a way that is right for your community, your child, your situation.

And if the principles are the essence of Montessori education, which is an education for life, they should be applicable. Otherwise whose life are we talking about it? They should be applicable. So we are going to try our best to really identify and understand what those are.

We must understand always, always that we embrace community involvement. There is never a child or an adult that exists outside of any kind of community. They are always a part of a community of which they are.

And sometimes, you know, we get distracted because people focus on the fact that Dr. Montessori said, "Help me to do it by myself." But she focuses on independence. A lot of people start to say, "Well this is and education for the individual. This is about developing just yourself, and who knows what else is going on around you. Well, two things. I actually think we should say, "Help me to do it for myself," not "Help me to do it by myself." If you say, "By myself," it does sound like this is in isolation. But if you say, "Help me to do it for myself," you can carry on and say, "So that I can do it for others." When we think about any thing you read of Dr. Montessori's work, she never, ever, ever puts the child on their own. It is always the child in the family. The child in the community. The child in the culture. And every Montessori environment is the child within their social context. And she sees the social context of the child as also their spiritual context. That the group, the social group, the community they carry for that child a spiritual reality. And so when we talk about helping children, we can never imagine that we can help them without taking into consideration the community in which you find them. Not the community you wish they were in. The community in which they are, because unless you bring the community with you, then the work that you do is going to be diminished. The work the child can do or the young adult can do is diminished because there isn't a general collective agreement that this is the direction in which the environment for that child should go.

I always believed that the magic ingredient in Montessori is not the child, but the child in community. I've got this marvelous quote that fits in so wonderfully there, but I will read it to you right at the end. It is a

quote by Martin Luther King actually, but I will read it to you right at the end. I will try and hold that little thought of mine before we get there.

So, embrace community involvement and engagement in the project design and the implementation. Help them to do it for themselves, not by themselves. Help them to do it for themselves.

So we also know that we have to focus on all the work we do to on account and long-term sustainability. To start something that cannot be finished because you lacked planning; you lacked the forethought; you lacked the ability to see what happened when you were no longer there, and how you were going to exit. To start that can sometimes be crueler than never having started it at all. To show the promised land to community of a school that is beautiful and then being taken away from them is a problem. To show that you might do this provided I am with you, but once I am gone, tough luck. This is not good integrity.

So, all our projects, all our initiatives, I prefer the word initiative to project, because project sounds like something you are kind of doing to somebody, but initiatives hopefully, in my own mind anyway, sounds a little bit more like something you might have agreed with somebody else to do. So all our initiatives should focus on empowering the people we are interacting with so that they in themselves can do the things that they have told us they want to do. That they have told us they want to do. Now that is a very interesting one, because you might not know what is possible unless somebody suggests that you might want to do it. But in our work, as you all know so well, because of the work that you are doing, you have to do what Montessori said, which is listen to the other. Get to know the other. Our work is an encountering the other. Education is about learning about the other. We have to learn to listen to the other. We have to learn to engage with the other. But we cannot do any of that engagement or listening with the other if we are still within our own viewpoint.

We will always have our own experiences, our own family life our own language, our own culture. And that is the lens that we will look at everyone we engage with. We look through that lens, but we must realize that we look through that lens. And then we have to try in the best way we possibly can to loose the: "I know that," "I have got a better idea," "I am not really listening because I know what you are going to say." You know these are the things we use as adults in short cut ways. The moment you are doing that, I am going to ask you please not to do that with each other this next two weeks. Until you are really listening and asking yourself, "Do I understand what you are saying?" Until you make space for the possibility that someone is actually saying something you do not know, or have not experienced in that way, you will leave this assembly and any work you do with the same knowledge that you came in with, because you have stayed within your own head, your own culture, your own experiences and your own decision making processes to what you think the right thing to do is.

We have to learn to engage with the other, whether we agree or we disagree. We have to learn not to defend, but to state, and to explain, and to listen to the counter.

And so in the work that we do, if we really want to empower and we want long-term sustainability, our work is the work that enables people to do the thing they really want to do. That identifies what would be the best help, and that we are prepared to walk away if it is not what people want. It is not just because we want it, that it should happen, but it is because the people themselves saying, "Yes, this is what we want." And our caution has to be that the mentality out there is that if someone comes offering something you say, "Yes," because it might not be there tomorrow. And so our caution in engaging, understanding, talking, responding, listening, asking, "Is this what you need, or would it be better if you had something else?" "What are your priorities?" "What is it that would make the biggest difference to you?" And if they say something you can't do, you have to say: "Well we need to find somebody else to help you with that, because it is not my expertise. I cannot offer you that." Even though you think that what you have got is the best thing that anyone could ever want. You have to be prepared to say, if it is not desired, if it is not the thing that is most important, after you have talked, after they realize what responsibilities lie within them, and what power lies within them to enact and help bring about the initiative, then we have to walk

away. So, if we can't empower and there is not long-term sustainability, then we need to be thinking very carefully.

Now that is not to say that everything always works out. It doesn't. With the greatest amount of thinking, with the greatest amount of preparation, sometimes it just doesn't work. And that is also true. But it shouldn't not work because you didn't do the work at the beginning. Because you didn't do the thinking and the listening. And of course all EsF projects embody an inclusive approach to race, ethnicity, religion, gender, language, culture and socio-economic status.

I want to tell you story about that. A long time ago when I was running a school, we had an inspector come to us and she was inspecting us on equality. Our ability to be equal in the classroom with the children. And so she spent all day making sure that classified cards of sports people did not have more men than women. She looked into our storybooks to make sure that our vegetables were not talking in a male or female way. And this is serious mind you. She was delighted when luckily for us one of the young men in the classroom decided he was going to wash his baby's nappy that he brought. So you know, tick, tick, tick, tick, tick. So that was all wonderful.

And as she was leaving, she looked to my assistant who happened to be saying something like she was going to be having about a religious holiday, and she said, "Oh, are you Jewish? You don't look it." It's true.

So, why am I telling that story? Because sometimes we think that we are actually unbiased, but if we listen to ourselves, we all jump to conclusions about things. We all make assumptions. And unless we are alert, we too, I hope not in that way, we too can, without meaning to, assume things that simply are not true.

So, those are the values (referring to the PowerPoint Presentation). But maybe you can think there are other values, or that we don't need those values. So that is a question for you. Should we keep those values, change them? But certainly we need to look at them and live up to them.

Okay, so now did you know that we are an organization in operational relations with UNESCO? Did any of you know that? Some of you did. Did many of you know that, or not? Some of you did. Well that is good, because Victoria Barres will be coming to join us on Friday. She is our representative to UNESCO. We have another person, Evelyn Greenburg, our representative to the UN. We are also the founding members of what is now called the International Network for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence, which is also an NGO in association with UNESCO and we were a founding member. The fact that most of you don't know it probably does not much affect your lives. Am I right? This means that we have got a little problem, that maybe you can help us solve. How do we get people to know that actually there is a way of influencing things? A different way and a different level. No matter how much you think that might be valuable, it is valuable. You are on a list. Believe you me, you are on a list. So you want the opportunity to say, "Yes, please," and not, "No, thank you."

SLIDE: AMI's Strategic Objectives

So, our objectives are to make a

- To make a positive and concrete difference
- To promote Montessori and advance understanding of its key principles
- Increase access to quality Montessori education - to get more human beings engaged in the Montessori principles and the Montessori way of experiencing life
- Expand opportunities for people to engage in the movement – we need people, we are a small movement with a great vision; we need to enlist and engage many more people than we have at the present time to help us; we need more partnerships; we need to be collaborating; we need to actually have a voice at your tables so that we can make a different way of engaging with what we are doing

- Represent and advocate for the rights of all children
- Develop additional resources that will be of lasting benefit to children and the global Montessori movement

SLIDE: Educateurs sans Frontières

- Article 16: An AMI program in which participants revisit the principles and practices from the perspective of society at large, as individuals; the participants will contribute to the aims of AMI, particularly Article 4f.
- Article 4f: Functioning as a social movement that will strive to obtain recognition for the rights of the child throughout the world, irrespective of race, religion, political and social beliefs, cooperating with other bodies and organisations which further the development of education, human rights and peace.

And if you look at our Articles, not one of them mentions school. I just need to say that. It is true; none of our Articles mentions school. It is not that schools are bad, they are marvelous, but they are not the whole picture; they are not everything we are talking about.

So the idea of Educateurs sans Frontières was an idea revitalized by Renilde Montessori. She took the idea from Maria Montessori herself, who first suggested that there should be an organization called the White Cross, just as there was the Red Cross, which responded in emergency situations to health, so too she felt there should be the White Cross, which responded in emergency situations with educational solutions for children in traumatized situations.

This idea did not really take off in Montessori's lifetime. So Renilde revitalized it, she said let us call it Educateurs sans Frontières, and so in 1999 the idea of a group of people working together in all parts of the world to change the way children were experiencing life became a reality. So today we are at only the Fourth Assembly since 1999. So we have a lot of catching up to do. We have a lot of work to do.

SLIDE QUOTE by Renilde Montessori:

"When using the term Educateurs sans Frontières, we refer to borders that transcend the obvious ones to do with nation states.

The truly important ones are the psychological and spiritual frontiers – the ideological, religious, racial, social and economic, cultural and linguistic boundaries which artificially divide a humanity as yet largely unaware of its intrinsic unity and interconnectedness with the earth that brought it forth.

That is the foundation for EsF.

SLIDE QUOTE by Renilde Montessori:

"So many children, of so many ages and characteristics, are in dire need of protection for a myriad of different reasons.

Very small infants, young children, adolescents, young adults – each unique and unrepeatable, all deserving to be seen as persons, all entitled to respectful care and education and every one with the inalienable right to be enjoyed and have their existence celebrated. "

SLIDE QUOTE by Renilde Montessori:

"Perhaps skilled and knowledgeable educators could penetrate, neutrino-like, the universal tissue of human society – a scattered group of individuals, ambassadors of the child, minstrels who come when called upon and leave when the wisdom of their song has been heard.

These would be the Educateurs sans Frontières, the educators without boundaries; able and willing to go where their presence is required. Never to intrude, not to indoctrinate, but to help and encourage others to learn, to rediscover the wise and ancient plan for wholesome growth with which all humans are endowed."

Isn't that a beautiful description of what we can be doing ourselves?

And so, if you like, this is the path we have been on. In 1929, AMI was established, but there had been a Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child in 1924. And from that Montessori actually formed the Social Party of the Child in 1937. And she spoke about that. She said that children needed a voice. They were a citizen and no body represented them. And she said, "I know people are going to tell me I should not get into politics, but we actually have to make a stand for the children; we have to advocate for them." And so she formed the Social Party of the Child.

In 1959, as you know, there was the Declaration of the Rights of the Child - UN, and then the Convention of the Rights of the Child in 1989. So we see that the very first Educateurs was in 1999. After that followed the Millennium Development Goals and the World Education Forum in Dakar (2000) where the Education for All Movement began. And so we can see that really that first Educateur took place at a time when people were really beginning to focus on not what might we do with children, but what should we say we are going to do, and how are we going to measure it? How are we going to measure it? And all of those goals have just been finally measured. It was a 15-year project. And so now in 2015, they are measuring because governments signed up to them. They said yes, we will promise that 50% more children will be in early years education. We will do this. And for the first time ever, they have been measured, and I have got some measurements to give back to you later in the week so that you can see how they have done.

And so then we had our second Educateurs san Frontières Assembly, which was in 2004 and the third in 2011. So you are beginning to see why we need help. There are some big gaps between one Educateur and another. It means that each time we are almost starting again from the beginning. That the momentum from the assembly takes a little while and then we are all saying, "Well, what should we do now?" So it is very important that this assembly could change the future of EsF if we could really begin to think about how to operationalize it. How to make it work for everybody. How to make it into something so substantial that people are disappointed if it is not every year. That the work going on around the world under the umbrella is supporting itself and supporting each other and becoming a worldwide network of human beings working together for children.

And so we came to the Dallas Assembly, which was 2011. And some of us have been at those assemblies. Was anyone here at the 2004 Assembly in Bergos, Spain? Three people. Do you want to stand up?

Was anyone here at the 2011 Assembly in Dallas? Could you stand please? Ok, a few more. This is good. This is great, because it means that people are beginning to think that they can sustain something; that they could carry something through. So I am hoping that when we have our 2016 Educateurs sans Frontières, some of you will be there.

Someone asked if we are going every year.

I think we will try and go every other year if we can, but honestly, I am just going to say this, it is really up to you guys. I think you can help us. If you could really help us, we will get there. I think we need it. I think it is right. Now the time is right. We really need to do something. Let's not come out of this assembly without some solid understanding of how to bring it forward for others and what we might be able to do. What we really might be able to do. So I think we have the power in this room to come up with something incredible. And we are open to it believe you me. We are not going to say, "Oh...."

But it is going to be us; it is not going to be me. It is not going to be AMI, because when someone says, "Oh its AMI," I am always looking around and saying, "Where is AMI?" "Are you AMI?" "Are you AMI?" We are all AMI, not because we did the training, come on. Not because we did the training, but because we believe in what Association Montessori Internationale believes in. We stand by the mission statement.

We believe in its articles. And we agree amongst ourselves that Montessori education is not the only answer, but it is the one we got. It's the one we've got. And so we have to do something and I am hoping you are going to help us do that.

We came to a declaration actually in Dallas. At the beginning of the assembly we said, "What are we going to do? Are we going to do a declaration? Should there be a statement? Shall we work on a global alliance for children? Should there be just personal commitments to out of the box initiatives? Should we find a modus operandi for AMI to operationalize its work?" Those were the things that we talked about while we were there. And actually we did a huge amount at the 2011 assembly. We did a huge amount.

We decided that we would do a declaration, and I have it. You can read it. We also decided that EsF work should begin to focus on particular areas. The areas that the whole group agreed to focus on were: pregnancy, early childhood, parent education, outreach, ageing and dementia. And we have done a huge amount collectively in that area. Between 2000 and now it is a different landscape, and I will show you that in a little bit. We decided that we would do more in trying to reach out to indigenous peoples. And actually we have done a huge amount in reaching out more to indigenous peoples. And when I say "We," I am talking the "we" that is AMI and that is you. Yes? You are with me on that. Not the we that is in the office.

We also said let's try and see if we can help children on the edge, so for example, refugees. For example children who are refugees that are in transit out of countries. There are many, many people working now in areas where we need to do something.

We said, "Let's see if we can focus a little bit more on public education." And I am listening to this group and it seems to me that maybe this group might be the group to take that idea and really bring it forward again. Where are you in Thailand? And what have they done in Thailand? They have got education in the public sector. It is the perfect place for us to develop that concept and idea.

And they said, "Let's try and do something for special needs children." And so, we have done things in all of those. We did a declaration. We took some next steps. We decided to try and identify more inspirational projects and initiatives so we could show others what they did. And we created a website. We did not have a website before. It was created during the last assembly last time, which is why we did not do a new one this time.

We developed the work of the Corner of Hope, which was an AMI managed project.

We worked in Thailand Montessori Public Schools, more looking at what we did in terms of supports of systems that were already in place for administrators, mentoring and so on.

The Montessori Children's Foundation was bringing Montessori education to the aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders communities and the Torres Strait Island community is now calling itself the Montessori Nation. They are seeing that Montessori education is a way and an expression of self-autonomy. Am I right? That is what they have said. By calling themselves the Montessori Nation we are telling people that we are going to be autonomous. And that is what they have chosen to do.

And, we have on our website Montessori Partners Serving All Children. This is a USA initiative up in Minnesota, which has outreach into the Spanish community, the Mung community, the American Indian community, and any other childcare that wishes to learn about Montessori and how to do it. They also run a charter school where they have children very early from families and they are actually, and Adele will be very happy to hear this, are doing research. So we are finding that there is huge outreach in that way.

The Bachman Lake Community School has evolved and evolved and evolved. It was in its infancy in 2011, looking at mothers teaching mothers in their homes to help their children to have language and skills that they might not otherwise have had. Helping the community to organize itself and to access

things that they need. That now has grown out of all proportion and there is a pop-up session that you can listen to how much federal money they have got to do marvelous work with those communities.

The Peter Hesse Foundation asked us to be, if you like, the curators with him so that when Peter Hesse himself is no longer for this world, I think he is very healthy, he would like AMI to look after his foundation in Haiti and Cote d'Ivoire.

Family Star, which is a wonderful small community nursery, but dealing with people who have very, very severe home problems and providing the most amazing family environment for their children.

Montessori Around the World, this was Jules Layman. She came to the very first EsF. She takes individual schools who are asking for help. She looks at them and makes sure they are bone fide and that they really need help, and then she places those schools on her website hoping that others will begin to notice them, and actually see what they are about.

And I am just going to go forward two for a minute because somebody did. And that is Sandrine. Sandrine saw the schools on Jules Layman's website and thought, "Right, I am going to go visit those schools. I will get to know them. I'll put them on my website, which is trying to pair schools that are in existence with schools that need help." And that is how you were inspired and that is what you have done Sandrine. Am I right? Yes.

So, one idea inspired another. And that is the point of these that are up. They are different. They are unusual.

And last of all is the Montessori Institute for the Science of Peace is the last two. The goal for the Montessori Institute of the Science of Peace, as you can see, is to help adolescents in particular to grow and develop in a very healthy way with a focus on peace.

So are we going to do a declaration? Do you want a statement? A global alliance? A personal commitment to out of the box endeavors? Maybe you want all of that by the end of the two weeks. We'll just have you think about that. But most of all, how about the modus operandi of how EsF to operationalize the EsF work? That would be a fantastic goal for us to also work to if it were possible.

We had a strategic plan coming out of the working group of the last EsF. You have all got it in your packs. Some of it we did, a lot of it we haven't. So you might want to look at that to see if we are on track with that. Somebody did this lovely plan to make it operational. And we got Fay, and that is a big plus.

But other things have happened in the mean time. People have started to work together and collaborate. This is the Sustainability Institute in Cape Town. They ran a course very recently. A 60 hour Assistants Course for 0-3, but what was the percentage of funded people? We said let's only do it if we get 50% funded. And it was over 50%. So you have the most incredible social mix of people, all studying children. You have people I am sure who just found each other surprises and understanding only to be found when you focus so clearly on something you love so much. So that to us was something just marvelous.

And then here are the Lockhart River Mob, if I am right. This is Lockhart River Mob, one of the more difficult places on the mainland. And I know that Gail will speak to those kind of ideas where there are very complex social issues on the mainland for the indigenous people in a way that perhaps islanders have a little bit of distance because there is water at least between the mainland and the islands.

I want to show you something that has happened as a result of the more effort with small children. Here we created what we call the "Aid to Life" website. It is a website with suggestions and videos as to how you might actually help children under the age of 3. And it is now translated into 7 languages. If you want

it in Thai, just ask us and you translate it and its up. That is what has happened for the others. Any language. You want it, you ask us, you translate it and we put it up. You can have it in any language that you like.

But the islanders said, and they are right, that of course the videos weren't relevant to anybody looking at that, but just a little bit of class somewhere, somewhere. And we know we have got issues with that, but at least we have the videos. And so they said, "Can we take exactly what you have done and copy it in our own way?" And so of course, what do you say? "Of course. Absolutely. Of course you can!"

And so, this is just a clip. So this is about "Freedom to Move."

Small Clip shown of the Torres Strait Islanders version of a video about movement.

Did that give you an idea? Isn't that gorgeous? And they have a whole website just based on the Aid to Life website, but absolutely right for their culture and their thinking.

As AMI we have absolutely no interest in holding on to these things. They are for anybody and everybody to make use of. And, as I said, we have got it now in seven languages and now their own version of what it is to have small children.

And here you see another initiative coming out of the Dallas goals. You might recognize Anne in the picture there. That is quite a good one. You don't mind me showing that? Here we have managed to bring together, and this is under the auspices of Montessori Australia Foundation, bring together some of the world's experts in dementia and aged care. Anne Kelly is leading the project. We have Michelle Bourgeois from the United States. Gail Elliot from Canada. Jennifer Brush from the United States. Accompanied by Pam Nunn, a trainer, and Annette Haines, a trainer. They are putting together a new standards document for how people should be looked after when they are inside aged care and also the training that staff should receive. They wanted to be sure, and we want to be sure because it will be an AMI training scheme, that Anne is putting together. Anne said, "It is all very well to have people who know a lot about dementia, but not enough about Montessori. That doesn't work so well. And it is not enough either to have a lot of people who think they know a lot about Montessori but they don't know too much about dementia. That is not good either." So why don't we see, if before this thing runs away with us, and everyone says they are doing everything, if we can't put together something that gives people a really good understanding of dementia and a really good understanding of Montessori, and then we will serve the community that needs to be served at the end of their cycle of life.

You can see that quite a lot came out of the Dallas EsF initiative in 2011. I am hoping just as much comes out.

We have expanded activity in Asia: Vietnam, China and of course Thailand. We have expanded activity in Kenya, Tanzania, Tunisia and Morocco. We have a new strategic initiative going on in South America, and here we have both Connie and Marisa here to talk about that and they will be able to tell us that she met with many people recently to plan strategy for South America. And there they are having their first meeting together. I think there it was eight countries coming together. (Argentina, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic)

So here we are 2015 Assembly. We are going to have a collaborative experience. We are going to work hard. At the end of this particular Assembly, hopefully we have documented your stories. We have written a different strategic plan. Maybe we have even developed an AMI mentoring and support program for people out there in the field. What do they actually need? You will have deepened your own understanding. You will have a better sense of what it is you want to do and how you are doing it.

What really would be great, would be, if, the great work of this Assembly is to revitalize EsF as a social reform movement. A movement as an organization. That is the deep question. How does a movement interact with an organization and how does an organization support a movement? That is the thing that we have to really look to and see if we can do. Our challenge is to find a way to grow both, so that they strengthen each other. Can this assembly help Association Montessori Internationale help build a compelling pathway to operationalize so that all of us are supported; all of us our networked; and all of us find that we are more influential. That is the question I am leaving you with today. Thank you.

Quote by MLK:

All this is simply to say that all life is interrelated. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality; tied in a single garment of destiny... Strangely enough, I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be. You can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be. This is the way the world is made. I didn't make it that way, but this is the interrelated structure of reality.